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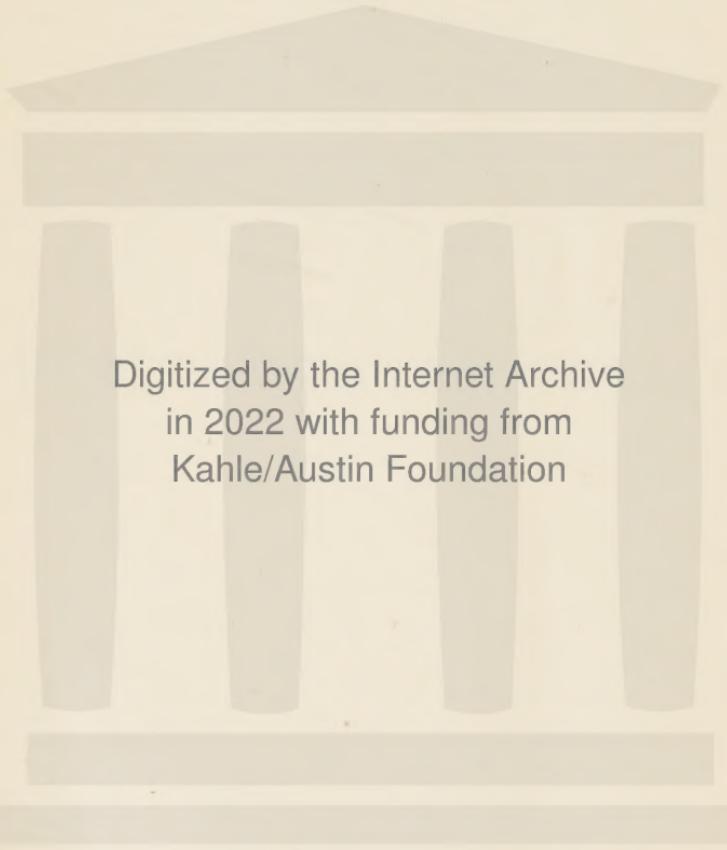
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# THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN FAITH



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# THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

BY

GEORGE FERRIES, M.A., D.D.  
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## PREFATORY NOTE



THE analytical Table of Contents serves to describe the nature and purpose of this book, and makes a lengthened preface unnecessary.

As regards part of Chapter IV. ("Philosophy and Religion," pp. 58-72), I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to the two works of Eucken, *Die Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart* and *Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion*—especially the latter—in which ideal elements of common, present-day experience are disengaged and emphasised. On one or two other matters, suggestions have been derived from articles in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*,—for example, from a discussion in that magazine on Christ's Resurrection, a subject treated in the last section of the ninth chapter.

I gladly take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Professor W. L. Davidson, LL.D., of Aberdeen University, for his kindness in reading the proof-sheets, and for giving me valued advice while the book was passing through the press.

G. F.

CLUNY MANSE, ABERDEENSHIRE,  
25th August, 1905.

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# THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

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## PART I

### THE PREPARATION FOR RELIGION

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#### CHAPTER I

##### THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION AND PROSPECT

As regards the great mass of the people in our land, it may be said with truth that the message of religion never sounds entirely strange to them; its law never appears wholly foreign to their nature. Something that was drawn from it has gone to form them as they are, and inclines the better self to recognise it with approval. Religion appears to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." Indeed, owing to the existence and beneficent action of the Christian religion in our midst for many centuries down to the present time, even Christian goodness is largely understood and appreciated by the multitude. The current of human life among us has been directed to a great extent by the element of religion, and nearly every individual in turn has in some degree come under its sway. Through countless channels this action of faith has told, both

directly and indirectly, on the men of to-day. It has impressed itself on education in the home, in the schools and halls of learning, and in the Church, on literature and institutions, on the lives of people who have been regarded as most estimable and renowned by their fellows, and on the choice and conduct of thousands in the commoner walks of life. Even though there has been no definite acceptance of religion on the part of many individuals, ideas and habits which are closely bound up with it, and are historically derived from it, contribute in great number to mould the thoughts and the practical bent of the people as a whole; or, in other words, of the individuals who compose the whole, and are a product of their land and time. In these circumstances, very many who appear to hang loose to religion are yet unwilling to cast it off altogether, finding, indeed, that it will not let them go, at least not until its voice has long been disregarded.

On the other hand, there is a strong opposing influence. This is the power and attractiveness of the material world, especially as recent science exhibits it. By far the greater part of men's time is spent, of necessity, in contact with a world in which physical causes appear to reign supreme. If these causes are utilised with skill, the great practical purposes of daily life are most surely realised. It is only in leisure time—all too brief at the best—that elevating and spiritual thoughts can be cherished and followed out; and it often seems, therefore, a hopeless undertaking to endeavour to cultivate them with any perceptible effect: one feels assured that the personality must be shaped in the main, must be really and finally dominated, by the worldly aims and agencies which preoccupy one so much and so long. If a person's mind is given up to the concerns of earth for, say, nine-tenths of his waking time, as in the case of very many people stern necessity demands, it seems inevitable that the earthly proclivities in him will

ere long permanently rule, and at length extinguish his purer spiritual aspirations. And, again, the intellectual discipline now in vogue appears to tell in the same direction. Positive truth is sought, concrete fact, as contrasted with vague general ideas or vain idols of the mind. Scientific discovery and advance has resulted from the resolute determination to set aside preconceived theories and fondly cherished imaginations, and to investigate the actual operations of nature, as these lie directly under our view. Now, there is a suspicion that the affirmations of religion belong to the region of abstract theory, to the world of ideas, for whose reality no thorough guarantee is to be found: that world of faith may be but a world of imagination superinduced upon the world of fact. It is not strange that questionings should arise in the modern world, though they may appear to contemplate an issue which is adverse to religion; it is almost impossible that those who have undergone the mental discipline which is now prevalent should fail to start them, each one for himself.

The general effect in countless instances is, that a strong craving for faith, an anticipation, it might be said, of its blessings, appears, along with much wavering and dubiety. There is heartfelt interest, together with a suspension of judgment, people being in a strait betwixt two. The faculty of spiritual insight shows a peculiar degree of tenacity or persistence. It hardly ever leaves a person wholly and entirely. Only, its action is apt to be seriously interrupted by such causes as those which have been mentioned; obstructions innumerable interfere with it; all manner of doubts and disputings are raised with reference to it; and so, while it comes with the richest promise, it can also be the source of the deepest distress, the chief means of spoiling and embittering the life. In the case of a matter so momentous and vital, affecting so largely the individual, the nations, and the centuries, one

cannot definitely take up an attitude of antagonism without the greatest misgiving, nor can one continue long to be of divided mind without experiencing almost equal misery.

A very special and very grave illustration of the kind of difficulties or doubts referred to appears in the fact that to untold numbers of those who come under the influence of modern thought, Church members though they are for the most part, and altogether, it may be, of fine *naturel*, exemplary, generous, and promising, the Person of Christ is practically a myth, is buried in the obscurity of the past, and language about Christian truth is little more than empty verbiage. Does this statement seem unwarranted? If so, it has to be said that abundant testimony, both at home and abroad, confirms it. It may be well, *e.g.*, to hear what a Professor of Divinity has said. "In the case of not a few of our contemporaries whom we observe, with whom we co-operate in the Church or in free Christian societies, Christianity takes substantially the form of trust in God on the one hand, and the pursuit of holiness on the other. In this matter, it is true, one can only know what one gathers from personal observation or derives from biographies. But within the range of the experience which is open to the writer of these lines, the state of things is often just what has been mentioned. Personal witness to Christ from the mouth of those who are not theologians is rare. . . . It is found among the quiet in the land, who, thank God, have not yet died out." And then farther on he says, "Let us not deceive ourselves: to the generation of our time, compared with the age of the apostles, Christ is in the first instance a strange person, or, if that is saying too much, an obscure figure of the past. It is our task to make that figure plain."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Scholz in the *Zeitschrift für Theol. u. Kirche*, 1893, Viertes u. fünftes Heft, pp. 352, 357. Professor Weiffenbach and others have written in the same sense. A similar state of things in

No miracle can be depended on either to transport such doubting persons in an instant to the new territory of faith, or to supply the fuller wealth of Christian knowledge which many others have attained. But happily there are links of connection between the most exalted faith and the simple beliefs and motives by which the minds of people are governed prior to the acceptance of any religion. As religion is a blessing to man, is suited for him, he is susceptible of it. As has been said, it is never *entirely* strange to his understanding and his heart. Can those connecting links and the later lines of progress be set forth in any detail? There is good reason to think that for a certain large class of persons, and within certain limits, this is possible. As in other practical matters, so in regard to the task of recovering faith and adapting it to thought, there may well be some lines of procedure which are intelligible and useful to the whole class of those who, as belonging to the same period, as being moulded by the same characteristic influences of this age of science, and situated in the same circumstances, generally speaking, are approximately on the same intellectual and moral level. When the starting-point is man as formed by the distinctive influences which are now prevalent, but man destitute as yet of personal faith, or greatly deficient in faith, and where the goal that is contemplated is a living, effectual trust in the spiritual God as He can be apprehended specially through the Personality of Christ and through a life conformable to that trust, it is but reasonable and consistent with what is found in other spheres of interest in which there is like definiteness in the

Britain is depicted by the Ven. Archdeacon Wilson, *Hulsean Lectures* on "The Gospel of the Atonement," Macmillan & Co., 1899, Lect. I., *ad init.* There are many in different classes of society, and in particular there are "myriads of well-conducted and well-educated people, who are sitting very loosely to the Christian creed." "It never got hold of them. It seems to them unreal." "The whole thing is outside them." Cf. recent discussions in the *Hibbert Journal*.

starting-point and in the aim, that there should be substantial community in the ways and means that have to be employed by the individuals concerned—that helpful directions at least could be supplied. Christianity in that case, it might well be hoped, could be truly received and assimilated by those who had felt themselves constrained to stand aloof or to hesitate. An existing interest is quickened. Then the progressive method would be followed which approves itself and succeeds in every other department of knowledge and art. But the individuality of each person has its rights and its obligations. Whatever helps are offered, no one can dispense with personal choice and action. The excellence of true religious faith is due, in part, to the fact that it is the response of one's own will; it is the best growth of the individual mind; it marks the highest reach of a man's private life and thought.<sup>1</sup>

Righteousness is an indispensable element of true piety; and even in default of religion, there is in all civilised lands a widespread practical acquaintance with it. In this way, again, Christianity finds the ground prepared for (and by) itself; the people now bring with them the power of understanding and valuing the richest fruits of the spirit. The conviction that it is wise and necessary to live an upright life is everywhere prevalent; the folly

<sup>1</sup> "Il s'en faut tant que la vérité évangélique soit sans contact avec notre nature, qu'au contraire elle correspond, elle s'unit intimement à tout ce que notre nature a de plus profond et de plus inaliénable. Elle y remplit un vide, elle en éclaircit les ténèbres, elle en lie les éléments désunis, elle y crée l'unité; elle ne se fait pas croire seulement, elle se fait sentir; et quand l'âme se l'est appropriée, elle ne se distingue plus de ses croyances primitives, de cette lumière naturelle que tout homme apporte en venant au monde. . . . L'Evangile est cru lorsqu'il a passé pour nous du rang de vérité extérieure au rang de vérité interne et, si j'ose le dire, d'instinct; lorsqu'il nous est à peine possible de distinguer sa révélation des révélations de la conscience; lorsqu'il est devenu en nous un fait de conscience."—Vinet; quoted by Lobstein, *Essai d'une Introduction à la Dogmatique Protestante*, p. 107.

and fruitlessness of an opposite course, or of blank indifference to conduct, is admitted by all whose opinion is of the slightest value. There is no room for question or debate on the matter. Beliefs, faiths, may for a while be put on one side, as obscure and of doubtful worth, but on the point of morality—as to the need of it—there is practical unanimity, even complete assurance. And it cannot be doubted that great progress may be made, by those who are actuated by this conviction alone, in the realisation of their purpose. There is no call for the religious man to disparage the mere endeavour after righteousness, or to belittle the results that are achieved. Much may be accomplished by the force of will; and there would be everything to hope for in the case of a land in which the mass of the inhabitants had made choice of moral integrity. All of us, *e.g.*, are well acquainted with the duty of maintaining truth in the first and most obvious sphere of its application, namely, as between man and man. The propensity to falsehood, though real and influential in the case of many, does not exist without a powerful check; it is all but universally denounced. There is an improved and an improving public opinion, an increasing respect for this and the other elementary virtues. We inherit from our birth a better possession than the heathen laid claim to; we have grown up under a better system of belief and practice. Those in a Christian land whose word is worthless are the exception; they are stigmatised, if they are not reckoned fatuous. Or, again, a sense of honour is accepted by many as the principal guide of life. Here a further advance is made; a sort of ideal of the mind is set up, a conception of what a rightly-constituted, high-thinking man should be and do. The thought of honour takes us near the sacred precincts of the Christian religion (Phil. iv. 8); the practical and consistent recognition of such a sentiment is altogether praiseworthy. The fact that many people set

up this standard for themselves and seek to conform to it warrants the largest hope.

In the record of Queen Victoria's reign, probably nothing has been more striking than the immense catalogue of improvements, moral as well as material, that were registered during the period. Abuses were corrected on all hands. Not that there is in consequence any ground for a confident optimism, or that we might not have to make certain substantial reservations: many will say there is cause for much misgiving—*e.g.*, when we reflect on the practical materialism that continued to abound and that still abounds. But the prevailing resolution to put down wrong wherever it could be proved to exist, and the progress made during the last two generations in carrying out that resolution, were unmistakable. Above all, if we take a wider view, going back to the beginning of the Christian era, the evidence is conclusive that righteousness has been a growing power among men. So true is this, that there has arisen, strange as it may seem, a new difficulty in consequence, to tax the resources of those who speak in the name of the Christian religion. This goodly product of righteousness now appears to many persons a fit substitute for faith. It is enough, it is the most commendable course of all, they think, to do what is right. Such persons, and they are now legion, are not represented or recognised in the New Testament. When the gospel was first promulgated, there were no people of that class to be met with; those who did not range themselves on the side of religion as convinced and zealous believers, were reckoned without hesitation as the wicked. Since that time, as the result of the manifold influences that have been at work, there have been developed in the community the knowledge of righteousness in its manifold earthly applications, and the habits which predispose men to it, and a clear perception of its value. From the stand-

point of religion the warning has now to be uttered, Guard not merely against evil as a hindrance to faith, but guard also, and perhaps as much, against good: "The good is the enemy of the better." The new cry tells, at all events, of an advance of virtue among men since the early Christian times. And that being so, it would be strange if there were an added difficulty ultimately and on the whole, in the work of propagating the faith of Christ,—a faith that loves the good and the true, and which declares that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." The principle which is stated in the words, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," is one that not only possesses the highest authority, but also comes home to us with something of the force of an axiom. And when applied to the circumstances just described as common among us, it inclines us to think that many are, if not among the followers of Christ, yet on the very verge of complying with the main requirements of the faith, without knowing it. Though doubt and perplexity abound, though with the prevalence of worldliness there is often little or no clear understanding of the things of religion, yet the increased adaptability of the hearts and minds of men for some of the chief gifts of Revelation is most promising and significant, speaks of a will which is pliant, and which might easily be influenced in the right direction, induced to choose deliberately the highest good, and to lay hold consciously of the highest truth.

In another important respect there is at this day a promising outlook for religious faith, inasmuch as the chief counteracting influence in modern times is losing its glamour, and consequently its power as a deterrent from spiritual pursuits. Natural science, which was hailed by multitudes in the recent past as offering the chief good attainable by man,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the oft-quoted phrase, "Matter contains the promise and potency of all terrestrial reality" (Tyndall).

has been tried and found to be by itself alone insufficient for the main purpose of his life. It has, no doubt, registered many marvellous successes; but the craving for a true good, such as yields contentment and hope, it has notoriously failed to satisfy. Men find themselves, just as before, in a world which cannot supply the principal needs of the heart and mind. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there was a brilliant advance of science, by which the face of the world might be said to have been transformed. Vast results were accomplished in many directions, and, not perhaps without reason, extravagant expectations were raised. There was a dream of perfect happiness as within the reach of man on this earth. He seemed to see the boundless treasure-house of nature opened up for his benefit and gratification, as the curious but efficient means of subduing the world were put into his hands. Work, which always had dignity, was stimulated afresh by the prospect of a tangible and copious reward beyond the dream of bygone generations. Truth was to be elicited as never before by contact with palpable realities. And morality was to be established on a firm basis by connecting duty simply and solely with the present world of positive fact. In short, by putting forth honourable effort, man had the hope of entering on full possession of the world; and the prospect added new zest to life as a whole. Civilisation entered on another spring-time. The heart of man was already filled by its own fancied riches and by the keen pleasure of anticipation.

Well-nigh two generations have passed, and there has been time to test the proffered boons. It has to be admitted with thankfulness that in the material sphere substantial gains have been made which cannot be lost, and that there is every reason to believe that much more of a like kind will be added. But the stern fact remains that, however successfully the means in question have been

applied, there is no appearance even yet of that golden age of joy and plenty, of abundance for the mind and life, that was greeted as at hand. The weight of the world, the burden of existence, is still felt, and there is no evidence whatever that it is about to be lessened. There is unrest as of old,—it is perhaps even increased,—there is still the love of change and excitement, the rush for gain or pleasure, a too common concentration of thought and effort on what is small, paltry, superficial; and where the world alone is sought, and even though it is in a large measure gained, there is still the old painful misgiving which springs from the suspicion that a bootless career has been chosen, the chief end of life being missed. The means that once seemed to be capable of placing the earth at man's disposal and crowning him with happiness has not produced the desired effect, and, moreover, has lost its novelty. The movement in its youth was naturally ardent, and inspired a sympathetic generation with the largest hopes. But the time of youthful exultation and trust is gone. Instead of the bliss that was fondly expected, it is found that the world that has been opened up overpowers by its vastness. No one living here for the brief period of man's life can know more than a fragment of it, not to speak of possessing the whole. Where is the entrancing gain that was foreseen? There is rather a natural reaction when the novelty alluded to has passed away. The sickness of hope deferred, disappointed in its main expectations, begins to be felt. The mode or aspect of human existence has, no doubt, been considerably changed; but in so far as men do not "possess their souls," the change means no solid improvement. On the contrary, the individual is frequently oppressed by the new revelation of his weakness and insignificance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion*, 1901, p. 45, holds that there is the most far-reaching consequence from the passing away of the novelty of science. It means a turning of the tide, a reaction now in

Character founded on religion is the first requirement. Without an object of desire and trust, and an aim in life which the heart finds to be wholly worthy, there is the crushing sense of defeat and emptiness, no matter what external gains have been acquired. This is the old assertion of religion (Isa. Iv. 1, 2; St. Mark viii. 36), supported by new and strong evidence. Truth is not promoted by contact with earth, unless there is first truth in the heart: truth is primarily a virtue—it is nothing without truthfulness. So, too, with regard to Morality in general. Righteousness is not to be discovered among the objects of sense; it looks to the ideal. Man does not chance upon it by a happy stroke of fortune, or attain it by the skill or force of genius; he can only win it by fighting day by day a worthy fight in the position allotted to him. But what effectual inducement is there to cultivate ideal truth, to pursue ideal goodness, to fight the weary personal battle? We are now confronted by the hard, indisputable facts of suffering and unrest, caused by the unequal struggle with the great world-machine, and with the mighty forces that determine history, and, above all, with the evil which often usurps the place of good, while no certainty is attained as to the meaning or outcome of "life's fitful fever." In these circumstances there can be no dependence on physical science as capable of supplying man with the perfect blessing he seeks. There is no substitute forthcoming in that quarter for the gifts of religion. The mind knows itself to be superior to the brute force of nature that thwarts it; man craves full scope for his best powers, and an upright, peaceful, prosperous existence in which he will be aware that his chief end is fulfilled, and a reassuring answer to the great questions relating to his origin and destiny. Until the truth is reached on these matters of vital interest, favour of religion; and the signs of this, according to that writer, are distinctly to be observed.

and until the light of that truth is reflected for good on man's daily path on earth, inspiriting him and leading him on to moral victory, he feels that he has obtained next to nothing. We acknowledge to the full the numerous and astounding discoveries of recent times; we admit that the doctrines of religion have to be read anew, and more or less modified in the light of them. But far from seeing that religion itself has been superseded, we find more convincing evidence than ever of the necessity for it. What was once its chief adversary, and threatened not long ago to supplant it, has at length contributed valuable support to it. The fact is singularly encouraging when it is remembered that first impressions and vague fears tell so powerfully in the field of religious belief. The characteristic achievement of our age, namely, natural science, is no longer to be dreaded as anti-religious in its tendency. There is, indeed, an after-effect of this kind still to be marked, and leading many to doubt or suspend their judgment; but when we have regard to the deeper currents and leading results, the scientific movement is found to be essentially corroborative of the testimony of religion. Indeed, in this connection it may be said that a new advantage has been gained for the cause of faith. The position is not simply the same as it was before the recent advance of science. Rather, it must be observed that, if such a wealth of important facts and such a world of truth as science has brought to view cannot suffice for man, there is fresh reason, and very strong reason, to think that no other power or product of earth can ever do so; he has a nature which by its constitution transcends the earth, and can be filled only by an infinite spiritual good.

If religion survives, it is more glorious than ever. The world is brought, as in past times, under its purview and its rule; and so the new discoveries in the secular field, in nature, and in history, when amalgamated with religion, not

only help to freshen the latter, to make its teaching a living thing, suited for man as he is at this day, but above all bring home to us with new vividness how large and amazing the faith is in its scope and outlook ; as the world to which it applies, which it interprets and dominates, is seen to be large and wonderful, beyond the conception or fancy of the men who lived a few generations ago.

## CHAPTER II

### CALMNESS OF MIND IN THE ACQUISITION OF FAITH

IN seeking to grasp and to apply the elements of religion, one is invited to weigh the matters that present themselves in this connection to his mind, and to decide calmly upon them. Calmly; for there is no occasion, as a rule, for a tumultuous battle within the mind, or for any commotion or agitation whatever. An inveterate belief survives that a strain and struggle, approximating to agony, is inevitable in the commencement of the process; and untold harm has been wrought in consequence of that idea for the cause of Christianity. People are naturally, and with good reason, averse to that fierce moral conflict which has been endured by some individuals, like St. Paul, or Luther, or Bunyan, before they could obtain any sure light for the soul. There are multitudes feeling after God and divine righteousness who find themselves incapable of allowing a complete disturbance of their inward being, such as the three renowned servants of Christ who have just been mentioned had to encounter, before they were persuaded of the truth of salvation through Him. Doubtless it is largely due to the one-sided and almost exclusive attention which has been given in the past to St. Paul's teaching, that the way to the truth has been so unwarrantably narrowed, in the estimation of very many people, and in presentations of it with which we are all familiar; a portal resembling that which the apostle and some others passed through being

represented as the entrance which is ordained for every person. But if all others are called on to engage in a stern mental conflict of the kind alluded to, the great majority will find that they are not equal to it; it is not seriously contemplated by them; they are turned back from the abode of spiritual peace at the threshold. We observe, however, that others of the apostles and many of their successors entered on their discipleship without having to face any ordeal of the kind; and the example of the many ought to weigh with us, and not merely the example of the one, or of the few. The first disciples joined themselves to Christ as His followers, because He presented to them in a superior and unique fashion the things pertaining to God and to righteousness with which they were familiar, and brought the truth to completion. They came at length to have the same spiritual perception and grace as their fellow-apostle Paul, but without knowing that abrupt and painful severance from their past which is so noticeable an element in his experience. In their case the tree of faith grew as if continuously, on the same spot, from greenness to maturity; but in the case of Paul the tree was, as it were, torn forcibly from the ground and planted on other soil. As with him, so was it with Luther.<sup>1</sup> The Reformer passed through an intense and almost overwhelming struggle for light, as he followed the minute prescriptions laid down by the corrupt Church of his time; till at length he learned the futility of all such endeavours, and arrived at the knowledge of peace and forgiveness by another and really effectual way. Now, it was probably natural that the example of St. Paul, who transferred Christianity to the Gentile world, and started that victorious march of the faith which continues till this day, and that the example of Luther, the first and greatest of Reformers, should have

<sup>1</sup> The exceptional position of St. Paul and Luther in this regard was emphasised several years ago by a writer in the *Christliche Welt*.

been regarded as the rule and standard for people in general who came after them. Nevertheless it seems clear that this conclusion is not warranted, and that incalculable evil has resulted from the supposition. The conclusion is not warranted. Saul and Luther had first accepted an erroneous form of faith, had embraced it with zeal and followed out its prescriptions to the letter, even when they led to manifest wrong, as to Saul's persecution of the unoffending Christians. Such a corrupt faith, held and proved in that determined manner, was only to be overturned by a sharp and sheer reversal. In each of the two cases a false form of religion required to be overcome and abandoned. The future apostle, cleaving as he did with bigotry and bitterness to what was erroneous and injurious, had to be sharply arrested; his beliefs and career had to be thoroughly altered. The other celebrated follower of Christ had also pursued a mistaken course in religion, trusting in external practices and strenuous efforts of his own, in many prayers, in midnight watchings and bodily afflictions, to bring him to the knowledge of the truth. Again, therefore, a time of acute tension was inevitable. There was a radical renewal of belief and practice, and abundant rest for the soul; but only as the result of a long convulsive struggle.

On the other hand, with regard to ourselves here and now, the principles of Christianity and the pure righteousness which it inculcates have been set before us all our days. We have been shaped and guided by it, more or less, consciously or unconsciously, from childhood onwards; and even if there has been no real personal grasp of religion, at all events no other faith than that of the gospel has exercised any power over us in its stead. An erroneous form of piety has not interfered to pre-occupy and excite and mislead our minds. There has been no intense interest, and no firm trust, in any kind

of religion differing from that which is set forth in the New Testament. Hence there is not the same occasion for an inward conflict and fiery trial as there was for those men of the past in whom two faiths met, the new and true opposing the old and false. The altered circumstances point to another and preferable mode of procedure in our case—in short, to a comparatively peaceful development.

But though people, in general, in our land are not called upon to reverse in the manner exemplified a long-cherished species of faith and worship, it may here occur to us that a multitude, those, namely, who are affected in any moderate degree by the secular knowledge of the day, are pressed to adopt a somewhat similar course, if they are to have firm conviction and inward rest. Their whole education leads them to crave for a new presentation of the faith which is suited for the present time, one which is living, moral and spiritual, and tenable in the light of the best knowledge they possess. Now, it may seem that here a distracting conflict is unavoidable in replacing an older form by another, in seeking to be true both to the interests of religion and to the requirements of the intellect. Undoubtedly, as a matter of fact agitation and distress have been created in countless instances by the cause in question, especially when it is observed that criticism has assailed every article of the traditional belief without exception. But the occasion for this disturbance is passing by; the strain at least is reduced. Science is not now a new thing; men are coming to see what it can and what it cannot effect. They are becoming convinced that religion is essentially moral and spiritual, and that whatever is of this order remains unharmed by science properly so called. A measure of peace is recovered, and its return is to be welcomed as advantageous to the spiritual cause. For negative criticism was calm, even

icy-cold, in its disintegrating work; and it can only be effectually met by calmness on the side of faith. There is a long work of reconstruction requiring to be performed in the sphere of Christian belief; but the spirit in which it is undertaken has to be characterised by restfulness, by an entire absence of inward perturbation, if the work is to succeed. The calmness of science should be imitated and even excelled, being sublimed to peace, the peace of God, which betokens strength, and is full of promise.

Again, it may be said that for all men in every age there is the serious obstacle of sin to contend with. That, however, is a hindrance which, great as it is in practice for the sluggish will, does not involve any distracting doubts and discussions for the moral judgment, seeing that the better spirit of everyone condemns sin as unjustifiable and unprofitable without any hesitation. A really and intensely trying ordeal for one who seeks to have a personal apprehension of the religion of the gospel occurs only if he has first to cast off another faith which he has long cherished, and when he is therefore in a strait betwixt two. A faith once possessed is entwined with the fibres of the heart, becomes part of the self: hence the peculiar wrench which is felt in parting with it. We are not called upon to encounter that excessive, agitating trial. With us the spiritual night could be turned into day by a gradual yet complete process of transition, like that which appears when any morning dawns. To suppose that anything like violent disturbance or prolonged mental tension is required in order to make an end of sin, would be to countenance some of the vain and fruitless endeavours which Luther first resorted to, without being impelled by the same exceptional cause that operated in his experience. What is now said is quite consistent with the fact that true and lasting repentance is necessary, as will appear later, and also with the fact—

implied in repentance—that *moral* advancement signifies a breach with one's past.<sup>1</sup> Only, this breach which is involved in all moral resolution and in every act of sincere devotion is to be distinguished from an acute, agonising struggle. The breach is essential; indeed, it must be recognised that the world by itself alone is vanity; but the convulsion with its mental and physical accompaniments is out of place.

The case of Bunyan presents itself at this point as suggesting the opposite conclusion, as leading us to suppose that the advance from unbelief and sin to a life of religion is attended at the initial stage with the most violent commotion within the mind. The example which we are now to examine is not one in which an inferior type of faith first occupied the field, but one in which there was no faith at all before the acceptance of Christianity. And yet the first effectual stirring of the spirit is represented in the *Pilgrim's Progress* as being accompanied with extreme excitement. The dream shows "a man clothed in rags, standing with his face from his own home, with a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back." As he reads the book, he weeps and trembles. He communicates his fears to his friends and relatives, and they suppose that "some frenzy distemper has got into his head." As he sets out from the City of Destruction, his neighbours think him mad. Ere long he plunges into a "miry slough," the Slough of Despond. After sundry difficulties on the journey, he is released from the burden on his back, which rolls off and disappears at sight of the Cross.

Here, then, the new departure in the spirit's history is described not as a quiet and steady process of enlargement, but as a hurried escape from a place of danger and death,

<sup>1</sup> So Herrmann, *Ethik*, 1901, p. 38, who points out that moral improvement is not a growth in the sense of naturalism.

a headlong flight for life; and every feeling involved is intense. And it may be regarded as certain, when we consider the extraordinary popularity of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, that the example of Bunyan has told with much effect in the same direction as that of St. Paul and Luther, in shaping and colouring the repellent conceptions which largely prevail even yet as to the process by which a soul is born anew to faith. Bunyan is spoken of by Froude as "a man whose writings have for two centuries affected the spiritual opinions of the English race in every part of the world more powerfully than any book or books, except the Bible." And no part of the famous story is more impressive, or better known and remembered, than the scene at the commencement.

And yet the example there portrayed is not normative. It has greatly contributed to shape a belief that still continues, namely, the belief that the commencement of personal religion is accompanied as a matter of course with alarm, distress, extreme agitation; but the grounds of that idea should be carefully examined. They will be found to be untenable. The symptoms are only those of a particular instance, and they are relative to the time and the circumstances of Bunyan. There ought to be no wide or sweeping generalisation. Something may perhaps be allowed for the graphic style of writing adopted by Bunyan and the effect which is due to it. But even so, the essential features of the case, which have already been indicated, remain unchanged. And for the explanation of them we require to recall the situation of the author. He belonged to the lowest class of society; he was ignorant of books, knowing only the Bible; and being without guidance he interpreted its phrases literally. The age was one in which demons were supposed to be active in the world, and in which men believed in witchcraft. The devil was believed to speak with man face to face, and to lure him to

destruction. The network of second causes which science has brought to light was not dreamt of by one like our author. Briefly, man had to do in a very direct way with God or with Satan. Bunyan had been more or less wild in his life, but no very serious lapse need be adduced as the reason for his distress. When we recollect the position in which he found himself in those days, we can understand how the common spiritual awakening, treated with his imaginative genius, yielded in the most natural manner the narrative we possess.

But in an age of general enlightenment and increasing culture like our own, such symptoms of reviving faith as are detailed in the *Pilgrim's Progress* are not, except in rare cases, or in the vanishing unlettered class, to be looked for. Periods of deep contrition and entire self-humiliation as towards God will, it is true, frequently recur in the Christian's life; but at such times there can and ought to be a calm exterior as towards man, the speech and action of an ordinary upright citizen of the world. Anything that could suggest to others a "frenzy distemper" will be resolutely suppressed. Spiritual training now tends more and more to move on lines similar to those of general education; *i.e.* although much more than the intellect is involved, much more even than human power, namely, the grace of God, the soul progresses, develops, as does the intellect when a person sets himself to learn a language, a science, or an art. We are confirmed in the belief that this is the best and most trustworthy method, by observing that it was the method that was depended on by Christ Himself. We have already alluded to the manner in which He first won the attachment of those who became His apostles: they were drawn, apparently without a struggle, by His words and Personality. Sinners, again, were subdued by the gentleness of reason and the force of love. A spirit of infinite calm pervades those of His utterances

which are addressed to publicans and sinners. As towards them His voice was gentle and still. We are reminded of the genial but all-powerful action of the sun in spring, and of the magnitude of the change which gradually results upon the dead earth,—a change compared to which the raging storm accomplishes but little. Or compare the change (apart from religion) in the feelings, aims, and life of any normally constituted man as he passes from childhood to maturity. It is far-reaching, completely transforming his thoughts and acts and the aspirations of his heart ; the man has “put away childish things.” But it is not the outcome of a troubled and well-remembered crisis. There have, indeed, been times of special illumination and of comparatively rapid advance ; but the great result, on the whole, is due to long-continued growth. Each day has been in the main like its predecessor, yet in the end the sum of the effects is immeasurable. A change of like dimensions is required in the spiritual nature of man ; and while the things of the spirit are distinctive in kind and in respect of the higher means that have to be employed, the end in this case also is best attained by a process of growth from a germ of life, by following a path which resembles that of nature and that which was chosen by Christ in His ministry.

It is, then, an unwarrantable though a common fear that the attainment of faith is necessarily attended by some sort of woeful catastrophe in our inward being. The healthy sense now rebels against any such mental and moral upheaval, and against the attempt to rob us of anything that we have found to be of value. But, in truth, just as we appropriate anything that is good, by a simple act of choice, without any turmoil of the mind, so is it with respect to the chief good, namely, the blessing of religious faith. By a movement of the better spirit which makes no unreasonable or even heavy demand on any one's powers,

the course of faith may be entered. There is no barrier or spectre in the way for any person; only the journey once begun has to be continued for life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Luther maintained in his earliest reforming period" (as against the predominant importance of the law, and the terrors of the law, in the Romish sacrament of penance) "that the only genuine repentance is that which springs from faith, and that the penitent ought not to be detained under fears inspired by the law." At a later time he changed his position, and emphasised the independent power of the law. However, "insistence on a 'conflict of penitence' under the conditions laid down by Luther and Melanchthon . . . is, to begin with, inconsistent with that idea of education through Church fellowship to which all the other principles of the Reformers point. Feelings of pain at one's own sin, which are compared to the terrors of death and hell, thereby fall under the category of emotions which belong to the domain of the purely natural life. . . . Now, all education consists in setting limits to natural and aimless emotions by exciting feelings of moral pleasure and pain, and in making possible the consecutive direction of the will to the good. This set of feelings is different from the other, for they are acquired and orderly. They are at the same time necessarily more peaceful, for they are modified by accompanying reflection. Now, if the transition from repentance to the assurance of pardon forms a self-consistent process, it must belong to the realm of education, and therefore cannot be experienced in those shifting feelings which, by the very strength demanded of them, would prove that the person concerned was destitute of all education. . . . Just as *letitia spiritualis* does not mean an emotion of the highest intensity, similarly the disapproval of oneself involved in repentance does not entail stormy sensations."—Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation* (T. & T. Clark : trans.), pp. 160, 164 ff.

## CHAPTER III

### DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

IT is suggested, then, that faith may be appropriated by the man of to-day in a manner that is consistent with all his secular training, if his spiritual life is developed gradually from a germ to the largest issues. At this point the thought naturally occurs to us that there are very many differences in the mental, moral, and material circumstances of men, and we ask, Is it to be imagined that the commencement of spiritual life and the path of spiritual progress will be uniform for them all?<sup>1</sup> If not, can the road which one has to follow be pointed out? Is there a road, and not rather a multiplicity of roads, about which very little remains to be said except that each person must choose for himself as best he can? Not to speak of what might be called minor variations, for this is not an exhaustive treatise, there are two or three great outstanding distinctions among men which meet us at the very outset. There are (1) many spiritually-minded persons who are wholly averse to the proposal that people should restrict themselves at first to the smallest fraction of religious belief, and that they should go on to appropriate Christianity by a method, as they would call it, of doles and infinitesimal instalments. There can be no salvation, they would say,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor James, *Gifford Lectures*, "The Varieties of Religious Experience."

through the merest particle of religion. Are many of the vital articles of religion to be held for a length of time in abeyance by one whose soul may this night be required of him? The faith appears to them to be minimised by such procedure, and its foundation to be rendered precarious; and the person who adopts such a course seems to imperil his eternal well-being. They feel that they themselves would simply be drifting, helpless and miserable, were they to commence any such undertaking, were they to pick and choose for themselves among the things of the spirit, to select a starting-point for faith and practice, and to determine the line of advance. They cannot presume to do all this in dependence, as they would say, on their own meagre, untrustworthy resources. If they tried, they would only be guided by their personal impressions; and these, however vivid, are ephemeral, are now strong, now weak, and are soon replaced by fresh ones. They submit, therefore, to the *Church's* well-tried teaching and authority, and thus only they obtain the rest and confidence they seek. They find that the body of doctrine which the Church has sanctioned, and which has edified the faithful for many generations, is of supreme value, and justly commands the assent of the individual of the present day. Hence ecclesiastical beliefs are accepted in their entirety, are taken as a finished whole, the parts of which are not to be loosened from each other and arbitrarily graded in respect of their priority or practical utility. So, too, for a like reason, the whole round of settled ecclesiastical observances is dutifully paced according to authorised prescription.

But (2) there are others who are dissatisfied with merely assenting *en bloc* to the traditions of belief in any Church. Their dependence is on *Revelation*, as interpreted and judged (but not measured, limited, or comprehended) by human reason, and accepted in sincerity by faith. They

dare not accept the faith in a vague manner as something external or unassimilated; it must be grasped by the conscience, and be intimately possessed, and be the life of their life. This position is approved, and these are the class who are more particularly contemplated in this book. The main question for them is not, What does the Church hold? but, What do they themselves hold, and how do they hold it? To them it seems plain that the Church has, and deserves to have, influence in so far as its teaching is true and its moral and spiritual ideals are pure and heavenly. But for them to submit without question to its influence is not to respect either it or themselves aright. They want, therefore, to school themselves with the aid of all available means, including reason, and, above all, the guidance of the Spirit of God, into the Christian system of belief and practice; and in schooling there can be no thought of an *immediate* reception of all the principles and details of a subject; but a beginning is made with the alphabet or elements, so to say, and there is progress through many successive stages towards the conclusion. They are content, if so it must be, that a long time should elapse before the faith is accepted in its entirety; only, they are resolved that there shall be a real appropriation of truth at every stage. In the end the whole would thus be for them a reality. The gospel, and the full gospel, is acknowledged to be requisite; but the gospel is held to be very simple in its elements, and the full gospel is believed to be of such incalculable value that the most patient care and trouble are willingly expended in order that it may be sincerely and firmly grasped. Is this to be always seeking and never finding? Rather, it is to be always seeking and always finding, because there is an infinite amount to be found. It is to magnify the truth of *Revelation*; it is to hold that the truth is worthy of the devotion of the whole life.

Here, then, we are confronted with two well-recognised types of mind which are strongly contrasted with each other. It is at once apparent that a uniform mode of procedure in the acquisition of religious faith is impossible. We have to bow to the inevitable fact that men are differently constituted, that while there are those who, for their highest good, require to refrain from independent inquiries, there are others who are chiefly conscious of their personal liberty and responsibility, and who find that they can yield implicit obedience only to the law and the truth which they see in their hearts. In such matters we are sure to be nearest the truth when we are most generous. When we speak in this essay of the growth of Christian Faith, the persons meant to be addressed are those, and those alone, who find that they cannot in the first instance truly apprehend any extensive body of doctrines, and that the only possible course for them is to begin with little and to advance with security, and with the sense of reality as attaching to all that they accept. They are the class who are formed by the characteristic influences of the present day, who are attracted by the spirit of science, and for whom faith becomes a power only when it is attained after the progressive manner exhibited in any other discipline, *i.e.* when it is made to coalesce and form an organic union with the primitive beliefs and convictions of our nature. But as there are others who follow a different route, yielding without demur, *in limine*, to Church authority in the fulness of its demands, let us recollect that, according to their own avowal, these others must either act as they do, that is, with an unquestioning spirit as towards the Church, or else fall away entirely from the faith. According to their experience, any other course than that which they adopt is for them impossible. Yet, since a division of parties that will not be closed, since a cleft in our Christianity exhibiting it as a house essentially divided

against itself, is not to be contemplated, some reconciling thought or thoughts must be searched for. Now, it can at least be acknowledged that the Christian spirit, and Christian life and conduct, may be developed in both sections, and that each has something to learn from the other. In particular, the Church has, without doubt, a great function to perform. It is the greatest institution beyond comparison that there is on earth. Its best members, as we shall see, show Christ to men as a living, present, active, and glorious power; and without the historical connection with Him there could be no Christianity now. Its doctrine, set forth as a completed system, the body of Church doctrine, reminds us that it is necessary to seek the *whole* truth, not merely to make a beginning or to rest satisfied with some partial acquisition of faith: it is death to stay one's progress anywhere. Then the attempts at defining the true Church serve an important purpose, obliging us to realise with distinctness what the unique spiritual power in history has been, and preventing us from explaining away religion by making it synonymous with the pursuit of science, literature, art, or social reform, and also forbidding us to set up limitations, under any name whatever, for what is *really Catholic*, meant for the world. And even the ceremonious forms of worship may be regarded as an expression of an important truth, as a realisation of the principle that in worship all things should be done decently and in order. The frequent abuse of forms, the extravagance and childishness, does not tell against the proper use. Many of these forms are recommended by the poet Wordsworth; and as being the poet of Nature he will not be supposed to overestimate mere ritual, or to assign a place and value to it which is unnatural. Religion, he shows, has an affinity with what is becoming even outwardly or in appearance;<sup>1</sup> and thus the forms

<sup>1</sup> Knight's edition of Wordsworth, vol. vii. p. 94, and p. 277 (first note).

which are first practised in the Church should have an influence over manners in the world, in sweetening life and making it smooth, in promoting gentleness and a pleasing demeanour in man's relations with man, *i.e.* in fostering the practice of religion in little things.<sup>1</sup> Further, there are circumstances, especially in the poorest parts of towns, in which it is obviously for the good of the people that they should be influenced first and chiefly through the senses, and that high authority of the priestly sort, and devoted ministration, should be exercised among them, and that they should be trained by outward obedience to rites and prescriptions and to the elements of morality, so as to rise ultimately to the independent judgment and full privileges which are designed for the adherents of the gospel.

Next (3) we are confronted with a third large section of the Christian body. These put the letter of the *Bible* in the place of pre-eminence, which others already referred to assign to the Church. Or rather, those who are now to be considered accept a definite, rounded, and complete body of Christian knowledge or theology which they represent as being founded on Scripture, as being alone warranted by Scripture, and, therefore, as binding in that precise form on all men for all time. Scripture is treated as an authoritative manual of theology, a text-book of doctrine. Proof-texts are collected from any and every part of the Bible in support of the doctrine which has been accepted; and no matter in what connection they appear in Scripture they are supposed to be fully authoritative for the purpose, as being the word of God, which is eternal, above the circum-

<sup>1</sup> Compare the marked civility in common life which is witnessed among the continental peoples, who are largely influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, or in countries where the Greek Church prevails, or even among Mahomedans. One can hardly help connecting it with the elaborate and more or less graceful forms of worship which are in vogue in all three cases.

stances of time and place, and of the individuals who were chosen to utter it. As has been indicated, the scheme of theological thought in question is rigid, precise, settled once for all. There is no idea, or at least no adequate idea, of a development of Revelation in the olden time, or of a real growth of faith in the man of to-day. It is assumed as a matter of course that any proposed mode of pleasing God and gaining peace with Him must be grievously defective if it does not take account of the fulness of the remedy understood to be afforded in Scripture, and apply that necessary remedy forthwith in its entirety. Can one presume to mount up to God's presence by the avenue of mere morality, that morality which condemns one to his face, or by the other avenue of a poverty-stricken faith which seems to strain after meagreness; as if a minimum of truth and goodness were to be treasured as the pearl of great price? The rejection of the theology in question is usually declared to be the result of negative or destructive criticism, and of man's refusal of God's word and law, and of his resolution to be a law to himself. (In truth, it is only a narrow and imperfect interpretation of Scripture that is rejected; and Revelation which proves to be infinite in its scope may be upheld and emphasized instead.) Can the Church, again, with her priests, sacraments, and ceremonies, all of them earthly and imperfect, and themselves needing to be cleansed, undo the enormity of sin in men, or make a due atonement? This is not to be thought of. There is a majestic scheme set forth in Scripture and culminating in Christ which alone suffices for the purpose. But according to the view of Scripture which is now considered, that scheme proves to be a hard and fast system of theology,—a system, too, which, though it claims to be exclusively valid, is only one among many that have been framed in the course of Christian history, and all of which have been given forth as resting on Scripture.

Here we have a species of faith of which, whatever its defects, there is much reason to speak highly, which is fruitful of incalculable benefit to those who truly possess it, and which down to this day is the only form that answers to the spiritual needs of many thousands of people. Undoubtedly we must hold that it is for them to cling to it and to put it in application as best they can. Not only does it contain truth, but it puts some of the most vital truths, as all must regard them, in the forefront. It acknowledges the fact that sin and salvation are the principal spiritual matters with which men are concerned; it teaches, moreover, that there can be no salvation which is of value or other than delusive, if the awakened conscience is not satisfied with the means employed to procure it, or if God's infinite purity would be at all compromised by granting it; and it keeps before us rightly the fact that Christianity in its fulness is seen in the Person of Christ and His work finished in death. It is a faith that has come down from past generations, and has long been the support of many of the fathers. Where it is now cherished it is usually understood to bespeak a mind that has not been largely imbued with the thought of the most recent period. Yet it can be retained as it stands by men who are conversant with the world in which we now live, and with the new scientific movement. This Christian system is to them something apart from the world of sense and common thought, a consistent unity belonging to the higher realm of the spirit, and the Bible is viewed as completely isolated from other books in respect to the mode of its composition; and so they can take advantage of the freshest thought and best appliances of the day when occupied with earthly affairs, and on turning to the unseen region can appropriate with evident sincerity the traditional form of faith in its rounded completeness. Others maintain that tradition simply because they are influenced by custom or some other unworthy

motive: their acceptance of it leads to no independent personal life of religion. And others again (those, *e.g.*, referred to at p. 26 ff.), find it to be for themselves a perfectly familiar form of religious belief, but one that does not imprint itself with effect on their hearts, does not carry genuine conviction as it stands, or respond without qualification to the spiritual need which is found by them to be urgent. It seems clear to these last, as they realize their situation in the modern world, that the ominous cleft between the worlds of sense and of the spirit, which was just alluded to, needs to be closed; that there ought to be no divided, broken life; that religion and life should be intermixed not only as regards the element of practice, but also as regards that of thought. In that case the freshness of current thought will be shed upon one's spiritual convictions with incalculable benefit; the truths of nature and the love of truth which is fostered by recent research will enrich the very substance of one's spiritual beliefs; and religion in turn will be a light and help to the whole life, giving meaning to the whole and becoming the means of unifying knowledge.

“But,” it may be said, “the precise theological scheme of Redemption referred to is scriptural.” True, it is in intention founded on Scripture, and in part it is actually founded on it. And because it was drawn from Scripture by men who truly sought God and used the best means available in their time, it has been and still is a trustworthy and sufficient support in life and in death for multitudes. On the other hand, Scripture is unfathomed and unfathomable; and the Spirit of God did not assist the men of a past age, in particular those who came immediately after the Reformation, and then depart for ever: the Spirit remains as a lasting guide; and, moreover, in course of time the earthly means of investigation are increased. The scheme in question, then, is *one* reading of Scripture, but it

does not follow that more of the treasure of Scripture can never be opened up. The scheme is uncritical and incomplete; its requirements are theological and doctrinal rather than properly religious. Its material images need to be spiritualised. There is a serious defect from the circumstance that Revelation is identified with Scripture, and even with the letter of Scripture. In reality, Scripture is only the record of Revelation, a sufficient and precious record, but yet one which is imperfect. And there are special omissions of deep significance in the system under consideration. The Fatherhood of God as set forth in the New Testament is scarcely recognised at all: Christ's narrative of the prodigal, telling how he was received to favour on simply returning with a contrite spirit to his father, is ignored. Our Lord's practice in slowly and patiently building up the faith of His first disciples is left out of account. And regard is not had to the significance of His Teaching and Life, but only to the purpose of His Death.

Again, it is fitting to ask what it is that draws people with interest and with effect to the perfect gift set before us in Scripture, or to any presentation of Christian truth. We must come to it with a prepared mind: it may be said that we get from Scripture what we bring to it. A prior knowledge of God and of the Revelation made through men and nature is requisite, an earlier growth of faith, which is confirmed and completed by a reverent and intelligent use of Scripture. Besides, even as we go on with prepared mind to appropriate the treasure described in Scripture, we may well hesitate to claim forthwith large knowledge of the Creator and His eternal decrees and purposes, or to profess immediate assent to the details of a theological scheme. Even the first recipients of the truth, though they were placed in most favourable circumstances and were specially aided, had to pass

through a lengthened period of indoctrination. Revelation exhibits historical growth, and we have to view it as a growth, *i.e.* as it really was, or as God gave it. Both because of its nature and of its extent, and judging from the example of its original bearers, we will conclude that we must be content to appropriate its truth by progressive steps. We recollect how little we know of the earthly works of the Creator, how man's conceptions of them have been enormously changed, how the material objects which were once thought to be simple run out to boundless and unfathomable complexity, and how the spiritual world is still vaster than the material. Shall any and every branch of secular knowledge be acquired only with patience and by a progressive method, and shall that subject which is higher than all that is secular as the heavens are higher than the earth be at once apprehended in its entirety, now that the age of miracles is past?

This third type of belief, then, will be unsuitable for many who have grown up in the present age. Yet it is by no means to be condemned throughout, or as it is held by its sincere supporters.

As a matter of fact, so far is it from being the case that faith is formed in all who come to possess it through a gradual course of development, that there are many who gain a large measure of it without any intermediary process known to them, namely, by being brought in contact, as they assert, with the personal Christ, whom they have realised with vividness, almost as if by the power of sense itself. The illiterate and utterly forlorn class often find the spring of hope and comfort opening up to them anew in consequence of some word in season addressed, as they would say, to their souls by Christ, or by some vision which they have caught of a present Christ,—a vision hardly to be distinguished, in the account given of it,

from one which is actual and literal.<sup>1</sup> Manifestly it must be vain or cruel to recommend such persons to articulate their thoughts, and to rise by means of their better moral perceptions to the stage of incipient piety, and thereafter to develop the faith so acquired by like gradations. To them the benefits of religion can be brought home with effect only if it is presented in strong, bold, graphic forms. By this means a plentiful gift must be instantaneously offered in the only way they can receive it. And so in general as regards the mode of propagating the faith, when it is viewed as it appears in the third species above, namely, as a comprehensive scheme set forth in quasi-sensual images, whose parts must be taken in combination: the truth has to be presented in telling, pictorial, parabolic announcements, but with no attempt at arranging the different portions with a view to their being accepted in any order of sequence; the suggestion that any part or parts may temporarily remain outside the framework of the Christian's faith is hardly tolerated. The whole doubtless cannot be exhibited at once, and so the different sides or aspects of the truth are put forward in fragmentary form in preaching; each of them is delineated and profusely illustrated; each in turn is made prominent for the time being.

The difference between preaching and teaching is here pressed on our notice. Each of these means has its proper place and function, and both were largely employed by Christ. He spoke to the multitude in parables. But in private the Twelve were also *taught*, because, as He said, they could understand the mysteries of the kingdom: in the Gospels the familiar and approved methods of teaching are seen in application. For example, Jesus questioned the disciples, with the view of bringing their own powers

<sup>1</sup> An extreme case of the kind is described, under a fictitious character, by Max Kretzer, *Das Gesicht Christi*.

into exercise, and frequently for the same purpose He set forth truth in enigmatical statements ; and, again, He kept back many things for a long time till the men were able to bear them. The training was slow, but, as the event showed, it was most effectual. As regards preaching, the example of Jesus has almost always and everywhere been followed ; but His other method, the progressive method of teaching those who are prepared or susceptible, has been practically ignored since the first times. A change in this respect seems, however, to be in the air. It is suggested, e.g., by the needs and capacities of quite young people. These are peculiarly amenable to the influences of religion : there are some truths of faith which are bathed for them in living light ; and yet it is manifest that, owing to their want of experience, there are other matters of the first importance in religion which as yet they "are not able to bear." On the burning practical question involved, there is a vast body of contemporary literature in Germany, under the title of *Unterricht* in religion. In this connection the following quotation is interesting, though it has reference to a somewhat different aspect of the subject: "'Give heed to . . . teaching.' Perhaps the Church of Christ has never given sufficient heed to teaching since the earliest and happiest days. In our own day the importance of teaching, or, as we sometimes call it, expository preaching, has been pressed home through causes that are various yet never accidental ; and it is probable that in the near future more heed will be given by the Church to teaching than has ever been given before."<sup>1</sup> But it goes without saying that if this method which is more strictly educative is called into requisition in our day, it is not adapted any more than it was in the olden time to meet the requirements of all and sundry: it appeals only to a section, large and growing, indeed, in an age of general enlightenment.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. i. (1898), opening of Preface.

ment, but yet limited. It is not meant that there is a sharp and permanent distinction between the functions of preaching and teaching, still less that the poor and those who are without secular learning are necessarily unfit to be taught. The example of the Galilean fishermen, and of many who are naturally well endowed, and who are trained in the hard school of modern life, at once falsifies such a supposition. Yet in their leading features the two means of grace are to be distinguished from each other. There is at once a distinction and a positive relation between the two. Teaching, and especially *self-tuition* under the guidance of the Spirit of God, fits one for deriving increased benefit from preaching. When one has had the advantage of general intellectual discipline, there is an imperative call to consecrate the intellectual faculty by employing it with zest upon the things of religion. The man whose mental powers are sharpened by activity in the world or by secular learning, has no ground to expect rest and spiritual comfort from merely listening to church services. He is himself qualified and is in duty bound to apply energetic thought, as he has opportunity, to the topics of religion. If this personal duty is neglected and all his best thought is given to earth, then, whatever he hears from another in the time of public worship, the concerns of faith are sure to become for him a tissue of unrealities. So, again, preaching should prepare people to be taught in the stricter sense, should lead on towards the consummation which is ushered in when all men shall be brought to the full knowledge of the Lord. There is but one gospel, whether it is preached or taught.

It will be seen that the three leading types of faith which have been spoken of are not entirely cut apart from each other. They touch at various points, and correct or supplement each other; and what is usually found as a

matter of fact is a mode of thought which on the whole shows the character and complexion of one or other of the three types.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One is led to ask in this connection—though this is to diverge from the point, or to anticipate—whether there can be a system of *Dogmatics* that would satisfy all schools. It is not enough to say that the truth has been revealed once for all, and is independent of men's idiosyncrasies. *Dogmatics* is not founded on Scripture alone, but has likewise to take account of the development of Christian life down to the present hour, so as to furnish aid and direction to that life as it now exists. But according to the standpoint of the individual theologian will be the kind of life represented by him, and the resulting presentation of the articles of faith, and the centre of gravity of the whole. Different systems of belief, differently coloured, having different regulative ideas, and different relative values assigned to the rubrics, would seem to be the consequence which is in prospect. One refuses, however, to rest in such "little systems," or in such difference as the end of the matter, seeing that we have *one* faith. As a preliminary to a better issue, it appears to be needful that there should be expositions of the distinctive types or manifestations of the faith, by persons who are respectively *en rapport* with each, so that the fulness of the Church's life may be apprehended, and that, with the widest basis to found upon, justice may ultimately be done to the whole.

It is essential that all, of whatever type, should keep to the Christian position or Christian faith, and so there needs to be an answer to the question, What *is* that position or faith? And we want to get the whole that the faith can give us. Any defect or one-sidedness in the *Dogmatic* statement is but a call to prosecute the subject further. Granting that there is no finality to be reached, yet progress is life, stagnation or despair of attaining truth is death; and so it is in all the secular sciences. The late Bishop Phillips Brooks, *e.g.*, had an almost equal feeling of sympathy for all the schools or parties. That implied the power of doing ample justice to them all, and shows what is possible.

Though religion is a living power, and religious literature is abundant in the land, there is, as a matter of fact, a general distaste for *Dogmatics*. This discipline does not appear to be valued even by the clergy. (Cf. Professor Flint's Introductory Lecture, Edinburgh University Divinity Hall, Session 1902-3, on *The Neglect of Systematic Theology*). We naturally ask, Why? Perhaps it may be said that the living interest of religion is chiefly connected with the actual existing manifestations of faith in the Church, just as the main interest of science is connected with the special branches and the concrete results,—wireless telegraphy, the power of radium, etc.,—not with the principles of science; further, that people obtain guidance from their own instinctive conviction of what is and what is not within the lines of Christianity, a con-

iction reached with comparative ease now that the religion has leavened the lands for so many generations ; and again, that for a pure and full form of faith, for that which they ought to hold over and above their actual limited possession, men find they have enlightenment enough as they contemplate the mind and nature of Christ as presented in the New Testament,—more knowledge, indeed, than they can apply. The observed fact, the aversion to Dogmatics, is not justified ; but it must have some explanation. It does not seem necessarily to imply a lessened interest in religion. Indeed, a high motive might conceivably lead people away from theology to religion, from Dogmatics, Confessions, Catechisms, when these had for a length of time bulked too largely in their estimation, to those aspects of faith which feed the heart and brace the will. On the other hand, if there were once more a healthy and vigorous religious life in the land, men's faculties would be engrossed in the high calling, thought among the rest. Thought would need, seek, and find satisfaction ; and this means that it would go back to first principles ; that it would discover and justify a regulating idea, and, in the light of it, would articulate clearly all the articles of faith. Drews says : “To-day much greater significance falls to Dogmatics by common consent than formerly.”—*Zeitschrift für Theol. u. Kirch.* (1898), p. 135.

## CHAPTER IV

### PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

#### I

IN the preceding chapter reference was made to those who are strongly influenced by the spirit of modern science; they were represented as turning to the subject of religion, with the view of arriving at a real and independent conviction regarding it. They want a faith that coalesces and harmonises with the clearest thought they have already attained, and the best instincts that already dominate them (p. 26 ff.). They would be prepared to advance indefinitely and for life in the cultivation of a faith that continues to satisfy this condition; but as for immediate or unquestioning submission to the prescriptions of any Church, however venerable, or the immediate acceptance of a rounded and complete body of religious doctrine—to this, even with the best will, they are not equal. It is with those who are in this position that we purpose in these pages to hold parley. The others, who are differently circumstanced (pp. 25, 30), are not here contemplated.

The purpose in view is practical, but nevertheless, or rather just because the matter is practical, there has to be an understanding with regard to philosophy. For whether one wishes it or not, that subject dogs his steps, and if it is not resolutely faced, his best attempts are continually frustrated; time and again faith is smitten or

paralysed with doubt. The question at once confronts us, whether the persons who are affected by the intellectual influences of the present day will not be dissatisfied if they have not obtained such evidence of the existence of God and of the truth of religion as will stand every test of reason or philosophy. They are not likely to be contented with mere tradition, nor yet with a faith that is based only on the feeling and choice of the heart, or on a judgment which has been reached by a partial and defective exercise of reason. Unless religion is firmly founded on principles which philosophy establishes or allows, it would seem that the brand of uncertainty is fixed upon it. Men crave for undoubted reality in their faith; have they got it if philosophy, which is the most thoroughgoing application of reason to the facts of existence, does not support them at the outset, and at every subsequent step? Suppose that philosophy were to propound a theory of the universe that commended itself as accounting for the indubitable facts of the world, without requiring the agency of God, so that God, according to the theory, was only a fiction of pious people, would it be honest, or would it even be possible, for one who was imbued with such teaching, to rise by a simple decision and act of the will to the apprehension of God? If the reason, *e.g.*, has rested in a materialistic system as the ultimate explanation of things, it would be impossible seriously to contemplate the acceptance of religious faith. Material nature being the source of all that is, it would be manifest that the object of faith was a mere fancy; religion would clearly be valueless, having no basis of fact, or being destitute of truth. It is needful, therefore, that the question as to the relation of religion to philosophy should be considered when we are bent on having a faith which is a felt reality.

There has been a well-known philosophical treatment of religion, prevalent about the middle and end of the

nineteenth century, by which the articles of the Christian faith were interpreted in the fullest light of the intellect, were divested of the sense-forms in which they were clothed in the popular mind, and were raised to the form of pure thought. Thus, being thoroughly informed by reason, they approved themselves to many a man of scientific habit, and were accepted as the highest truth, which was in harmony with all the truths derived from other sources.<sup>1</sup> Religion was justified at the bar of the highest reason, had its place assured by philosophy. It is necessary to look more closely at this elaboration of religion, with the view of determining how far it is of service for present-day requirements; for the system referred to has gained exceptional influence and currency down to the present time.

In this country the particular system of philosophy alluded to, or one moulded upon it and closely akin to it, has for long been regarded by many people as necessary and sufficient for the thinker in religion. We have met with it in every branch of theological literature for a generation, and we still meet with it or with the effects of it. It is *par excellence* what is taken to be the proper and conclusive treatment of religion by human reason. As first acquired and understood and applied in worship, faith is represented as clothed in sense-forms; but transform your faith in the sense indicated above; make it translucent with pure thought, as it is possible to do by means of the categories and relations supplied and proved by the system in question, and your religion becomes *philosophical*; the reason that underlies all science upholds it; it takes rank with science, and is, indeed, the highest science; no power can shake it.

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, the head of this philosophical school, distinguished religion in the popular pictorial form as *Vorstellung*, from the form of pure thought, called *Begriff*.

It is needful to examine this philosophy in its bearing on religion, because otherwise one is certain to be told sooner or later that, though he might attain by common and simpler means to a faith which would be of a certain value to himself, there must be much error and contradiction involved in it; in respect to every article, the truth will be mixed with error; and so the faith could not stand the shocks to which it is inevitably exposed in this age of science, and if the desired consummation is to be reached, a change or transformation of enormous magnitude would have to be wrought upon it. The work, in short, would have to be performed over again from beginning to end. A real faith, it is assumed, is wanted; but thinkers of the highest repute in the recent past, forming the dominant school, have come forward to say that, unless faith is treated in a certain definite manner which reason prescribes, the faith attained will necessarily be unstable and unsatisfying; its grievous deficiencies will appear as soon as thought is allowed to play freely upon it; there will be as much unreality in it as there is reality. Even after possessing it, one would be driven hither and thither like a wave of the sea, and would be little better of the possession. There could, then, be no confidence whatever, in endeavouring to acquire religious faith, if there is not an understanding at the outset with regard to the claims of this particular philosophy. The consideration of them will afford an occasion for determining our position with regard to philosophy generally.

An admirable exposition of that special philosophical treatment of religion which has been referred to is furnished by the late Principal Caird of Glasgow. In his *Gifford Lectures* delivered there, he gives a presentation, brilliant and profound, as was to be expected, of the "*Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*." The object aimed at is to interpret and justify to the reason the leading constituent parts of

the Christian system of belief. Prior to the application of philosophy to faith, it is assumed that religion exists on the part of the individual, but that it is only an intuitive, spiritual, immediate apprehension of the Christian doctrines: the reason has not yet been exercised upon them. Just as any of the sciences presupposes the practice of life in the department concerned, and is applied to practice, so philosophy presupposes and is applied to the life of religion. One strong reason which is given by Principal Caird for maintaining the prior necessity of the religious life, is that certain qualifications of the heart and moral nature are demanded such as philosophy cannot engender. "The reception of religious truth," he says, "implies a moral and religious, and not a merely intellectual, attitude of mind. It cannot be an act equally possible to the irreligious or even immoral, and to the pure and spiritually-minded. Belief in Christ cannot be as independent of any moral element as belief in Socrates, or Cæsar, or any other historic personality; or, again, as belief in the Copernican system, or in the Kantian or Spencerian philosophy. The faculty of historical criticism by which the element of truth is extricated from any narrative of events in the past may be possessed in fullest measure irrespectively of the moral and spiritual character of the critic, and the process of historical investigation may be carried on successfully or unsuccessfully without the investigator being either in the one case the better, or in the other the worse. The intellectual subtlety and deftness which enables a man to grasp the salient points of an argument, the speculative insight in virtue of which he can appreciate a philosophical theory, are qualities altogether apart from the moral tone and temper of his spirit, or the purity and elevation of his life" (i. p. 36). "The response of the Christian consciousness to the glad tidings of the gospel, the spiritual appropriation of the great ideas of the Christian Revelation,

the Fatherhood of God, the forgiveness of sin, the sinless perfection of the person and life of Christ, the call to participation in a life of sonship and sacrifice akin to His own,—the appeal which these and kindred ideas present to the believing mind, and the act of spiritual apprehension by which it responds to that appeal,—are, in whatever way we describe them, wholly different from intellectual assent to consciously and deliberately reasoned opinions or to the articles of a theological creed.

“But this concession,” Principal Caird continues, “does not by any means imply that no place or function is left for reason or rational investigation in the province of religion. Theology is not religion, but neither is ethical science morality, nor æsthetical science the sense and enjoyment of beauty, nor grammar and rhetoric the gift of speech. The sciences of Optics and Acoustics are not meaningless because we can see and hear without a knowledge of them, nor the sciences of Anatomy and Physiology because the knowledge of them is not necessary for the performance of the bodily functions. . . . In like manner, religion exists and must exist before it can be made the object of reflective thought; but there is no more reason, in this than in other instances, why experimental knowledge should exclude scientific knowledge” (i. p. 41 f.).

We see that the serious and purposeful application of reason to religion is regarded by our author as commencing after the practical apprehension of religion. There is first a real and fruitful Christian experience, most if not all of the doctrines being sincerely accepted in the traditional form of faith. Then at a later time the intellect asserts its claims, and it obtains satisfaction when each and all of these doctrines are seen to be justified at the bar of scientific knowledge, by which he means philosophy.

So in the same author's previous work—*Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*—the aim is to make explicit and articulate the reason which is from the first implicit in religion. There it is said (new edition, 1894, p. 4): "Philosophy does not pretend to make men pious. It presupposes religion, but makes no claim to produce it." The purpose of the book is happily set forth in the motto on the title-page, quoted from Anselm: *Negligentia mihi videtur, si postquam confirmati sumus in fide, non studemus quod credimus intelligere.* An existing faith has to be rationally interpreted. However, part of the function of philosophy is to refute scepticism, and accordingly the recrudescence of Materialism, as in the writings of Huxley and Tyndall, in the days when Caird wrote his *Introduction*, had to be noted, and an effective reply was at once forthcoming. Matter, it was pointed out, is not the independent source of all that is; it is not a self-existent *datum* prior to thought and productive of thought. It is nothing except in so far as it appears to mind. It has itself an ideal factor. Furthermore, this thought, which is elemental, transcends in its essential quality every limit we can know. Even in its highest reaches it knows itself as finite, and this implies the presence of an ideal standard by which thought measures itself. Thus the human mind grasps that perfection which is found only in God. In like manner, Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism was refuted.

Every person is in the first instance the product of his age; and it is instructive to notice how the matter stands in this respect as regards this celebrated theologian and fascinating writer. One sees that the primary religious situation which Caird contemplated is not the situation in which the present generation of people finds itself. Consequently the answer he gave to waverers and sceptics, masterful and consummate, alike in substance and in form,

as that answer was, no longer serves its purpose.<sup>1</sup> It was telling and fruitful in its day, but once more there is tension and dubiety. The new position calls for new modes of treatment. In the early life of Principal Caird, what was commonly found among the educated youth who acknowledged the power of religion was that the current faith was taken over by them *en bloc*. This is no longer the case. Among the same class now, every step in the religious life itself implies intellectual conflict. In the Memoir of Principal Caird by the Master of Balliol, prefixed to the *Gifford Lectures* of the former, from which we have quoted above, we read (p. 35 f.): "Hume had awakened Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, but he had been less successful in his native land, where a philosophy of 'Common Sense' protected men from unsettling thoughts, and, as it were, consecrated the *status quo*. There was then in this country no very powerful stirring of thought, no very potent philosophical influence, with the doubtful exception of Coleridge, and religious controversy was generally concerned with quite other matters than the metaphysical basis of theology. Dr. John Macleod Campbell had, indeed, for a moment troubled the waters by his attack upon some of the principles of Calvinism, and had perhaps loosened the hold of the strict system of Election and Predestination upon the religious life of Scotland. But the immediate effect was to produce a tendency to regard those doctrines as too mysterious for discussion, rather than to awake a thorough examination of the assumptions on which they are based. Perhaps this was one of the reasons which caused my brother in his earlier ministry to turn away from discussion of

<sup>1</sup> So Biedermann's *Christliche Dogmatik* (2nd ed., 1884-85) has been taken by many in the recent past to be such an irrefragable statement of the faith. Already, however, few would allow that its principal positions are unassailable, or that it meets the chief demands of the hour. And it was a masterpiece of its kind, as a metaphysical system of Dogmatics: it has no successor that ranks with it.

doctrine, and to dwell almost exclusively upon the ethical aspects of Christianity, and particularly on the idea of unity with Christ—leaving the dogmas of Theology to rest on the basis on which they were supposed to be secured by the words of Scripture, as interpreted by the tradition of the Reformed Churches.” Then, after he had been a preacher for a considerable number of years, “he began to be dissatisfied with this attitude, and to seek for some more distinct *rationale* of the faith that was in him.” And how masterly his achievements in this direction were, all in this country who are interested in these subjects are aware. Philosophy took the traditional faith as it found it, and justified it to thought. And where scepticism took definite philosophical shape, in particular, where it was crystallised as Materialism or as Agnosticism, spiritual philosophy could and did meet it on its own ground with a technical and unanswerable rejoinder.

But *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*; the old order has changed. Christianity is not now appropriated in the first instance as a faith which is unquestioned: the principle of development tells in the religious sphere as elsewhere. In recent years the advance of science and the popularising of science, the spread of such doctrines as Evolution, the criticism and historical investigation of the books of Scripture, and the rejection of verbal inspiration—such causes as these tend to make the rising race suspend their judgment, temporarily at least, with regard to all the formulated doctrines of religion. These are not in any true sense, in the case of a vast multitude of minds, accepted even in the form of “faith.” Children, indeed, have still the child’s naïve belief. But to suppose that those who are receiving the higher school or college learning of our day, and in general those who are impressed by current natural science, hold the traditional views on such matters as “the Fatherhood of God, the forgiveness of sin,

the sinless perfection of the person and life of Christ, the call to participation in a life of Sonship like "His own"—that would be an unsafe assumption. Not to speak of individuals, it may be said with confidence that the characteristic feature of the time is to question everything that is offered as religious belief. There is, it must be allowed, a general craving for the aid and light of religion, and a favourable disposition towards Christianity; but in an enormous number of cases the convictions regarding Christian doctrine are neither rightly formed nor badly formed: they are simply unformed. For such minds the great *desideratum* is such clearness or trustworthiness in the field of religious belief as science has taught men to look for in other departments of human interest. The actual position which may be taken as the starting-point is not one in which it can be said *confirmati sumus in fide*.<sup>1</sup> The great question now is not as to the proper understanding of a faith already possessed, but as to the acquisition of faith itself in the first instance. Ritschl and his followers are at least right in so far as they hold that it is not the task of the theologian at present to call in philosophy to make translucent to reason the various articles of faith. Such an attempt of philosophy, by its own admission, must fail of effect, if there is not the faith as a felt reality to found upon: "Religion exists and must exist before it can be made the object of reflective thought" (Principal Caird, quoted above, p. 46). Our contemporaries, who have been disciplined by science, are chiefly concerned to acquire such a *faith* for themselves. They find that before it is tenable in any shape, it must approve itself point by point to their reason, as well as in the practice of life. Reason still requires to be applied in the sphere of religion; but by force of circumstances a different application is demanded from that which was formerly made. Reason has now to

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* motto quoted above, p. 47.

be exercised at the commencement, not merely at a subsequent stage of the religious life.

At present, what we observe is that people are immersed in the world of sense, and are attached to it by new and very strong bonds. The struggle for existence obliges them to engross themselves with it—to master as far as possible its laws and processes. Besides, men's minds are interested and attracted by the marvels which are brought to light, by the variety, beauty, and utility of the discoveries which have been made. The heart itself, it may be said, is delighted; the imagination is stirred at thought of the grandeur and extent of the universe, and hope of still greater results to come appears to be well grounded. For such reasons there is a general appreciation of the clear principles and positive methods of secular science. They are plain to sense, and the practical results exist in proof of their complete trustworthiness. The positive principles in question are imbibed in the formative period of youth, and, as a matter of course, they affect the judgments which are formed regarding all the chief concerns of life. They create a feeling for truth and fact; they accustom one to test and verify whatever is proposed for acceptance, and at least to suspend judgment wherever verification is not forthcoming. Whereas, then, in a bygone generation the creed of the Church was accepted in its traditional form without hesitation, was really held as a faith, even in its details, this is no longer true. In the case of very many there is hesitation or suspension of judgment with regard to it. The several articles of the Creed are not borne in upon their minds with the same cogent clearness that characterises the other branches of knowledge; there is, on first consideration at least, a felt want about them. Faith is desiderated but not possessed; the subject-matter of it is vague, elusive, lost from the mind's grasp, as if it were hanging apart in the clouds.

Hence the difficult situation that now exists is not relieved by raising the sense-forms of religion, the earlier *faith*, to the form of *pure thought*—even supposing that were in any case possible.<sup>1</sup> Those who have not possessed religion as a faith could not benefit by the philosophical elucidation. Philosophy only professed to improve the form; it expressly avowed its inability to draw men to the life of religion. At most it undertook to assist in the preliminary matter of refuting scepticism.

The great outstanding feature of this idealistic philosophy, in its bearing on religion, was that it undertook to impregnate faith with pure thought, and so to give faith the clearness and immovable stability of such thought. As it did so in past times, it confirmed many in their religion: they possessed the initial faith even in its details, as an element of life that they could sincerely call their own, and thereafter the faith was thoroughly illuminated and proved. But in the circumstances that now exist, after a generation or more has gone by, when people are growing up in great numbers without that primary faith, or have lost it, the support that was once derived from the philosophical system we speak of is naturally and necessarily no longer forthcoming. That system created much enthusiasm in its day, and no wonder. It is equally inevitable that the enthusiasm should now die down, as we find to be the case. For the new need we have to look for a new species of relief.

## II

As we observed, the fact of unbelief was by no means overlooked by philosophy a generation ago; it was care-

<sup>1</sup> A *Person* or *Spirit* (not *thought*) is the ultimate unit. The matter is again referred to when the nature of Christianity as a historical religion falls to be considered.

fully noted, and an effective reply to it was made (p. 47). Materialism was then rampant, and was more pretentious and plausible in its assertions than it is now. Is not the doubt or disbelief of the present day, which is occasioned by contact with the material world, sufficiently met and counteracted by that old refutation, by the reply that was first given, and, it might be said, given once for all, by Kant? This cannot be admitted to be the case. It is true that the former answer to Materialism was and still is thoroughgoing to those who have some skill and training in Psychology. It was to the effect that material objects, instead of being the sole absolute reality and the source of all that is, are themselves only phenomenal, owe their relative existence and qualities to the senses that perceive them and the mind that knows them. If the nature of our knowledge of matter is carefully examined, it is discovered that elements of mind contribute to the formation of it. Matter has no independent priority; there is no object without a subject. But it is pointed out by Paulsen (*Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 6th ed., 1899, p. 79), that this common and irrefutable argument of idealism serves but little purpose if it stands alone. He admits that it is calculated to arrest the thought of one who has leanings towards Materialism; perhaps it may stagger him, but it will hardly succeed in establishing a lasting conviction. The person who hears it for the first time will be apt to think that some advantage has been taken of him, that it is quite possible to argue after the fashion of the idealist, and that it may be hard or impossible to meet his reasonings, but nevertheless what he asserts is not true. For the truth is after all that the world existed before me and my thought, that sun, moon, stars, and earth had a being before there was an eye to see them. As soon as one's glance is directed anew to the external world, the belief returns with irresistible power that this world of

solid objects is the actual reality, and is not dependent as respects its existence on the reflecting subject.

It requires but little consideration to assure oneself that the powerful and often apparently overwhelming influences that tend to create a materialistic habit of mind in the people of the present age will not be effectually counteracted by a single somewhat technical demonstration in the field of Psychology. We are immersed in the life of sense; the secular ideas and fruits of science press upon us in countless numbers from every quarter. All are daily and hourly affected in many relations by the novel products of earth and of human skill, so much so that men appear to be in danger of being carried away by their conceptions and preoccupations of a worldly kind, as by a deep and steadily flowing stream. Is it to be supposed in these circumstances that the situation will be perceptibly improved, for the generality of thoughtful people, by an endeavour on their part to ponder a fine point of psychology, to examine the nature of our knowledge, to mark the ideal element that enters into the objects of perception? The supposition appears grotesque. The attempt on their part would seem like the act of a drowning man who clutches at a straw; in a moment they would fall back again into the current.

The old technical refutation of Materialism is not disparaged; as an answer to the trained sceptic, it has its lasting place and value. But though it has been plied among us for more than a generation, the desired end is not fulfilled. The influence of science continues to tell strongly on the general convictions of mankind; the trust reposed in matter and its laws tends yet to be predominant. If the spiritual beliefs that have been handed down to us are to be preserved, the argumentation that was formerly depended on by philosophy needs to be largely supplemented.

Philosophy has been of engrossing interest to our race, because its great aim has been not to raise curious questions needlessly, but to enable man to arrive at an understanding with regard to the principal matters with which he has here and now to do. Everyone is deeply concerned with the main facts of his own life. We require an explanation of our consciousness, of our life as a whole; and philosophy, as one has said, is consciousness taking account of itself with all that it contains. Looking to the facts as given to us, we find a world of the senses and an unseen world of thought, feeling, and will, and through our personality, constituted as it is of body and mind, these two worlds exist in close connection with each other. It soon becomes apparent that very much depends, even for immediate practice, on our interpretation of these facts. If the material element of things is regarded as the basis and origin of the whole, the natural course is to view the world of sense as the supreme concern of man, and to confine one's attention entirely to it; if, again, the unseen factor is recognised as independent and normative, man's chief concern is with things that lie beyond this material sphere; we are prepared to find that his origin and destiny are of that spiritual order which religious faith apprehends, and that he has affinities with that higher spiritual realm to which faith aspires. In short, the way to religion seems to be barred in the one case and to be laid open in the other.

But to return to the facts. Our preoccupations with the material world form a part, but yet only a part, however important, of our experience. Science, when exalting the physical aspect of nature, persistently points to experience. But philosophy shows that it is needful that we "keep the whole of experience clearly in mind."<sup>1</sup> Turn to experience by all means, only we must "insist that there shall be rendered to it all that is its due."<sup>2</sup> Other living writers of note,

<sup>1</sup> Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, vol. ii. p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

besides the author quoted, rest their philosophy on the same incontestable basis:<sup>1</sup> it is held by them that there must be a comprehensive view of the facts or data that we have to start from, and that no violence must be done to any of them. And surely it is characteristic of true science to proceed in this way, to make a careful survey of the whole situation, and not to disregard or undervalue any of the realities which are taken by the mass of men to be such, and are, moreover, of vast and determinative significance in practice. It must be acknowledged that experience consists of mental and moral as well as of sensuous contents; there is a world of thought and feeling conjoined with impressions and observations derived from the material sphere. In any explanation of life or experience which is sought, justice must be done to both series of elements; neither series must be simply set aside, as that constituting the mental and moral department is so apt in effect to be. Certainly one may restrict his inquiries to the physical aspect of things, and investigate them by means of the exact methods with which he is familiar, and the results will often be of very high value; only they do not cover the whole of our pressing interests, and they are not an explanation of our life. Man as man needs to enter on the larger and higher field of inquiry, where the facts are withdrawn from sight and sense, and methods of precision are inapplicable. If due regard is had to the latter class of facts, we are prepared for vital religion, as the one and only means for explaining them, for imparting much-needed truth in reference to them, and for developing them to the full extent of what is possible. Along this line we do well to seek a rational ground for religious faith; we rest on the solid ground of fact; we seek an explanation and satisfaction for the deepest and surest elements of experience.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Eucken, *Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart*, and *Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion*, *passim*; and Paulsen, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*.

And the train of thought appeals not merely to the few who are interested in abstruse speculation, but to the general body of thinking people; since the facts exist in the life of every one and are open to the observation of all; and every person, moreover, is deeply concerned with them, for the way in which they are understood and dealt with determines what the man himself is to be.

It is but half the truth to say that we are immersed in the world of sense. It may equally well be insisted that into the life of the generation to which we belong there enter ideas, motives, and principles in great variety, which rise above the life of sense and claim to control it. The man of to-day, formed as he is by the influences of his time, may have the fact brought home to him that along many lines the best that is in him reaches out to a spiritual realm, and if the sphere of matter or sense is all, that better element is meaningless, contradictory, an intolerable mystery and source of pain. While there is a stream of material facts and sequences which threatens to engulf us, we have to ponder that other stream which is also deep and wide, and, like the former, is always with us, though its significance is not so easily marked. Along with the familiar powers of earth, there are others in great number of a higher order which enter into our being and shape our aims and character, and but for which the life of man would degenerate towards the life of the beasts. Over-against the mass of facts and laws connected with matter we have to set the other mass, equally real and equally present and operative among our contemporaries as a whole—not merely among the avowed adherents of religion—which connect us with the world of mind or spirit. And though a single piece of argumentation like that referred to above (p. 53), which is somewhat exacting, and takes us away from the general life amid which we are placed to the region of abstract thought, may have little practical effect, this multitude of facts of the

unseen, spiritual order, which themselves belong to that life, which are closely intertwined with it and go to form what is best in it, may well be expected to impress those who give heed to them. Intellectual constraint, indeed, is neither possible in the case nor desirable ; but we can maintain the trust that the better self will not readily consent to be effaced by the lower.

Pure naturalism, which represents the rule of sense in its unqualified form, would exhibit man as concerned solely with the preservation of the life of the body, and with the attainment of bodily pleasure, and the avoidance of bodily pain. Doubtless this is, and remains, a pressing aim of mankind at every stage of culture and faith ; and there are undeveloped races with which it continues to be the sole aim. The child everywhere is dominated by the power of sense, and the savage is content to eat and to sleep and to slay. And even among civilised peoples, individuals of whom better was to be expected are governed in their course of life as a whole by motives which are essentially of a piece with those of primitive man ; in their case, self or sense, in one form or another, rules all. But civilisation as a whole has better elements than this to show. The great bulk of its members are animated by other and higher principles ; indeed, without those moderating factors which regulate the powers of sense, the civilised state of society collapses, and a form resembling the early, utterly degraded condition returns.

1. In the first place, *Work*, especially in those regions where nature is unpropitious, and everywhere as the population increases, becomes an imperative necessity. In process of time there is a dignity associated with labour ; it has independent claims which are conceded to it ; the material fruits of it are not the only results that are valued. Ease or pleasure is often sacrificed for its sake. The sense of right is developed in connection with it, and

one contracts a love of one's work. The inhabitants of a civilised country as a body, and with comparatively few exceptions, know something of these calls of duty, of the rightful place that their chosen occupation holds in their existence; they are accustomed on occasion to make other attractions give way to it, and they cannot disregard it without compunction. Already, then, we observe a power operating among us which begins to raise the mass of civilised men above the simple state of nature or the bare life of sense. The pressure of sense in one important sphere is effectually resisted; the natural feeling of the moment, which was first all-powerful, is controlled by habit and by the conviction of right. Duty and dignity are apprehended and respected. But right, duty, and dignity belong to the unseen world of the mind. This, then, is one invisible factor of importance which goes to constitute experience, and it has large scope and undoubted validity. It is understood by all and sundry: this is one of our most confident assumptions in our intercourse with people generally.

2. The sentiment of *Right* is familiar, and is wide in its application. It claims to regulate the powers of sense as a whole, and it calls for a definite frame of mind and a certain practical bearing towards our fellow-men: we must be actuated in our feelings and relations towards them by love. In both cases the good comes to be distinguished from the useful or the pleasurable. Otherwise, the question what the good consists in may be variously answered. It is expedient for our present purpose to take that conviction which men in general are agreed upon—the fact, rather than a particular explanation. Enough that so long as the self-seeking element continues in any form, however refined, in ostensible moral action, the characteristic quality which we attribute to right or duty is destroyed. Necessity of the moral order is laid upon us in pronounc-

ing the kind of judgments now referred to, and in giving effect to them; there is no question of mere taste or capricious choice. The truth in these matters appears clothed with sovereign and undoubted authority; the claim made upon us is unconditional; one course of conduct approves itself as possessing inherent merit, another is condemned as essentially worthless and degrading.

It is implied that conduct which is moral must be determined by an agent who is free: there must be a spontaneous choice. Were constraint applied from without, we do not regard the man himself as characterised in any degree by what he does or suffers. From the fact that there was compulsion, the resulting act tells nothing as to the deeper quality of the person. It is true that severe constraint is an important element in moral discipline, as in the training of youth, or in the consolidation of a nation such as old Israel. But we assume that in such cases there will be a response from within the minds of those concerned to the good which is enjoined. It is only when there is this effect that the discipline has served its purpose. The higher qualities of the mind are drawn out, are brought into free and independent exercise; and if this issue fails to appear, if there is no *choice* of the good for its own sake, we say there is no distinctively moral growth: whatever the man does or is obliged to do, he is still a product of nature, and ruled by the power of sense. When, however, the light of true righteousness has risen, it claims to rule the whole world with which we as living, active beings have to do. There can be no fellowship of light with darkness, of right with wrong. Evil yet stands, indeed, but its position is disputed. Men yield to it in countless instances, but even in doing so they hate it and condemn themselves. There is a strain and tension introduced into our existence, a war which can cease only when there is one of two issues,—either the complete

victory of the good over the whole field, or the return to pure nature, with its primeval mental darkness and moral chaos. The actual position, as known to us, exhibits the stress of conflict. A power which is unseen has interposed to set men at variance with themselves; the good in them is in deadly enmity against the evil; and since both adversaries are very strong,—the one as having prior possession of the ground, so to say, and being backed by all the keen, sensuous impulses of man; and the other, by virtue of a lofty and acknowledged claim of right,—there is a determined strife, continuing throughout the life of the individual and also down through the ages. Not that human life is rendered thereby miserable; on the contrary, it gains an absorbing interest. Great issues are found to be at stake; vast possibilities are laid open, and we cannot be indifferent to them. Every victory of the good secures at once the richest kind of prize to him who wins it; and even the struggle is elevating, as proving what the choice is, showing that the end sought is already implicitly gained. The full triumph of the good would mean the exaltation of our race towards the highest plane of worth. There can only be progress towards that consummation; but there is no conceivable close to the progress which may be made so long as human life remains on the earth. Every advance opens the eyes to new and larger possibilities and capacities. The gain and the glory attainable pass all imagination.

Here, then, is an influence which is unseen but very real, now and always acting among mankind. The vastness of the power alluded to is unquestionable; it is clemental and coextensive with the race, and no limit can be set to its action and consequences. What should raise man, at first a creature of sense, so high, taking him above himself and leading him to contend even against himself? What should make him, who appears but an atom, oppose,

if need be, the whole visible world, and aspire to the impossible, and give him confidence and awaken enthusiasm the more he aspires ; and convince him, on the other hand, that if he abandons this strife, his life, whatever he gains that may be relatively valuable, is a failure ? It is reasonable to infer that there is a Power above himself and the world, guiding and supporting him, and co-operating with him to form a spiritual personality in himself, and a spiritual fellowship of men with each other on the scale of infinity. The facts take us, without doubt, to the world of the unseen and spiritual, and show us a power there which is actual, unique, and boundless ; and they give ground for the faith that there is a spiritual and infinite God in intimate union with the hearts and lives of men, knowing them before they know Him, and drawing them with strong bands to Himself. It is but a faith, yet it is a reasonable faith.

3. It has been said that the good as such must be man's accepted choice, otherwise it is destitute of moral value. Those who are conquering in the battle which is in progress are promoting a cause with which they are themselves identified ; hence *they* are inwardly moulded and elevated ; the gain is theirs and the glory of it. The *Freedom* of the *Personal Self* begins to be understood. One learns what the reality of life is, what its meaning and dignity and promise. There is a pampered, sated life which is ignoble in comparison : this is not the end and object of our being : we perceive it to be false and unreal. A better portion, in fact, is already in a measure attained. Truth in the large sense, truth as synonymous with goodness and worth, is being realised ; it is taken up into the self, and forms the true self. In making this acquisition, man secures his personal freedom. He can never be said to be in bondage to the right or the truth—to what he himself chooses and honours and loves : in casting in his lot with it, he does but

assert his freedom and his individuality ; and as he labours for that ceaseless extension of the reign of right which has been referred to above, his freedom is correspondingly enlarged. A perfect personality, enjoying absolute freedom, would be one that was true and righteous altogether. On the other hand, if the power of sense remains supreme, the man is enslaved ; he cannot do what he would ; he is driven or carried away by passion ; he is more a part of nature than lord over nature ; he does not know the freeman's might and gladness. So, too, while there is a dignity of labour, yet if the moral meaning of that labour is lost from view, if it is not made subservient to the great end of life, but is itself treated as the chief end, man can easily become a slave to his work. In this industrial, hard-driven age, many, as a matter of fact, sink into this form of slavery. It is when regard is had in practice to the truth and worth of life that one gives effect to the claims of work without being entangled, consumed, or lowered by it. In that case it contributes its share to the upbuilding of his character ; while he remembers that he is more than it, and more than a superior kind of machine. This freedom, this assertion of the higher self and cultivation of self, in the midst of a world pervaded by natural laws and causes, is another familiar component of experience. Either it is known and possessed, or there is a glaring evil which one often recognises as such ; and in doing so one agrees with the better portion of mankind, that there is a worthier course to which the light of truth and reality points. Man's true personality with its freedom is above nature ; it takes us above the primitive life of sense ; it bespeaks a growing and glorious attainment. Very much interposes to hamper and destroy it ; there are adverse and immeasurable powers which are always with us—the pressure of the senses and the appetites, the enveloping forces of nature, the deadening effect of custom ; yet man in his feebleness and isolation

is encouraged to fight against an opposing world, as it were one against a thousand, and does fight, for freedom and for the higher interests of the personal self. This fact supports the faith that he is visited and sustained by a Power which is greater than the world, that fresh draughts of inspiration and energy are continually to be gained by him from the free Spirit that is the source and life of all that is, and has nowhere left Himself without witness.

4. Again, *Unity* of life is indispensable: but unity is not the gift or product of nature; it is brought by the human mind to nature, and determines the mode in which nature is allowed to affect us. In virtue of the freedom which is gained, and as a result of the consciousness of self and of the meaning and value of life, we learn in this other way to oppose ourselves with effect to the forces that surround us. Owing to the multitude of appeals which the modern world, now so largely explored and utilised by the skill of many minds, addresses to the individual, owing to the pressure of many competing attractions in it, one's energies are apt to be dissipated. Natural knowledge has now run out into countless and far-reaching ramifications. Each department of it, each minute section even, creates a fascinating interest; and for a while the unknowing youth allows his fancy to roam over the whole world that begins to open up to him; he may dream of making conquest intellectually of the whole. But soon it is made apparent that life is too short and the individual too poorly endowed for such a purpose—that *In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister*. Hence one makes choice of a particular field and adheres to it. With limitation, unity of aim is thenceforth kept in view; effort is purposely concentrated; whatever does not bear with sufficient directness on one's chosen vocation is resolutely set aside. But this unity of aim is dictated from within the mind: in that inner region there is a conscious process of self-

examination, and of sifting and weighing, of accepting or refusing, the matter that is offered. Thus the man vindicates his position of superiority over the world by informing his action with this principle of unity ; and thus only he has peace and power to perform his part with success. The bending of thought and of every faculty for a prolonged and united effort within a limited field gives promise of abundant results. These are not a simple gift from the treasure-house of material nature ; they are gathered when man turns round on Nature and meets her endless multiplicity with the constructive unity which springs from his own being. And as many notable successes have been registered in our time, and a multitude of people have attained a considerable amount of success of which little or nothing is known,—for it is often gained in ample measure amid worldly failure,—and in every instance the issue was due in part to the deliberate concentration of purpose and activity which has been described, we see once more how the life or experience of mankind as known to us is shaped, not by external processes to which they passively submit, but by an inward and invisible factor which the mind itself supplies, and which actively selects and utilises those other facts and forces.

The procedure which has been stated, according to which a preference is shown for a portion of the numberless realities presented to us, through the operation of a principle of unity which is itself shaped by the judgment of the individual mind—this procedure might appear arbitrary and unwarrantable were it not confirmed by religion. One is supported and steadied in the course of thought and action which has been mentioned, when he regards his spirit as standing in relation to *One* Infinite Spirit, and as representing a definite creation and design of a Supreme Being. In that case, one asks himself what special talent or aptitude

has been made over to him by that Sovereign Will, so that he may give effect to his personal bent in fulfilment of the original purpose, and in dependence on the Being whose Unity his nature in a manner reflects, who understands that nature, and can reinvigorate it out of His own fulness.

Thus also people are encouraged to seek a remedy for the loss which is implied by the necessary restriction of worldly endeavour. The limitation of thought and effort which is called for if unity and fruitfulness of life are to be secured, obviously betokens in one aspect a real and extensive loss. There is a narrowing of the range of view, and a degeneracy of certain faculties through disuse. Notwithstanding the necessity for concentration, it must appear to be a serious evil when the world's store has so much to offer that seems of value to the individual, and yet all but a minimum is rejected. When, however, God is acknowledged, not only will regard be had to the private capacity of the self, but it will be remembered that the world as a whole exists for wise purposes ; everything in it is now calculated to stir the feeling of reverence ; everything speaks, and it is fitting that the soul should hear. One is invited once more to enlarge one's view and to extend one's endeavours. There is a renewed desire to survey the manifold works of creation, and to requisition their aids for the purposes of the soul. While it is impossible to grasp many details, there is at least a real interest in every kind of human achievement. But even so the unity or personality of the individual continues to assert itself. The quality and complexion of his life and work determines the plan according to which he concerns himself with the special productions which are observed ; the world yet affects him only as he allows it to do so. However, the narrowness and loss that were inevitable, and once seemed deplorable, are obviated as far as may be by

cherishing the conviction that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Even where freedom and the means of shaping one's existence for a single end such as will be worthy of a human being appear to be denied to men, as in the case of the crowds of workers who are like wheels in the great industrial machine, and with regard to whom it seems but a mockery to say they have any power of self-determination on the lines indicated by their native endowments, since they must grind on mechanically or starve, there is evidence of the fact that a high ideal element belongs by right to man's earthly state. For the grievance in question is felt and admitted; there is a general condemnation of the condition to which such toilers are doomed. The degradation of the higher powers and the ultimate elimination of them by unintelligent labour could not be held to mark the normal state: people see and strain after better things. When a wrong is freely acknowledged, a remedy for it may be assumed to be in prospect. A suitable amount of leisure, and means for improving the personality as such, are rightly insisted on, and the claim is allowed, and in various ways it has effect given to it. And obviously nothing throws such light on the situation or supplies so ample relief for it as religion affords. Religion explains those demands of the self; it justifies them by declaring that every person has a nature which is from God, and formed for Him, which is even now acted on by Him and taught to aspire to an endless height. Religion illuminates drudgery itself, and causes it to be accompanied with the cheering music of the heart, by imparting to it the sacredness of duty, and exhibiting it as a means for the fulfilment of the loftiest moral and spiritual ends, and a means, too, which appears to be indispensable for men, for all may be said to have experience of it in one form or another.

5. Again, we have a faculty which transcends time and

craves for *Eternity*. All things on earth occur in time, yet all are not regarded by us as standing in the same relation to time; we draw a very noticeable distinction between them. We assert our own judgment as to their temporal value. There are those which we find to be transitory, evanescent, of little or no moment therefore. There are others, again, which we recognise as enduring, and so of supreme importance. It is the function of history to examine and sift those things that happen in time, and to give prominence to those which are really significant and influential in the chain of constructive causes. Certain occurrences clearly shape the future in some of its leading aspects; they are exalted by the historian as epoch-making. In this way we find suggestions of realities which are above time altogether. We are induced to seek what is absolutely permanent, eternally true, and we take this conception of permanence or eternity with us as a standard by which to measure the quality of anything that is presented to us. Thus we are not passively borne along on the stream of time; in respect of our inward nature we can stand out of the stream. We pronounce judgment on the succession of events and on whole periods. Certain intervals are found to be characterised by stagnation, darkness, paltriness of aim, when people could only be said to have lived but little; others by fruitfulness, progress, largeness of view, when much was crowded into a short space, so that the little in truth measured much. But if man judges occurrences in time and whole ages of time, it is implied that he possesses in himself a standard higher than time, and empowering him to be the judge. There is that in him which reaches forth to eternity.

The knowledge or perception in question is not by any means the exclusive possession of the distinctive class of religious people, though religion has to do in a peculiar degree with things eternal. It is shared by our contem-

poraries in general, though the historian is specially trained in the acquisition of it. It is one of the unseen constituents of the life of the community, for all pronounce judgments of the kind spoken of, and are guided by them in practice. Accordingly, we learn how man, as he grows up, has an affinity with the higher world with which religion is concerned; how he has a craving for it as the world in which alone he can truly rest. There is additional support from these considerations to the faith that a light or reflection from the eternal world has visited him and continues with him; that One who is eternal has communicated to him something of His own essence, and is Himself always present with him for good.

6. Furthermore, there is the craving for *Infinity* or *Perfection*. The life of men or of nations is an unceasing struggle. The possession or the truth they have attained at any stage is but a stepping-stone to higher things. Infinity or Perfection alone is the goal. Whatever advance has been made, there remain those "obstinate questionings," those "blank misgivings of a creature moving about in worlds not realised," of which the poet speaks; those instincts, recollections, pronouncements of the heart which are "the fountain light of all our day," "a master light of all our seeing." This incessant pursuit of a perfect possession and of absolute truth, amounting almost to a confident anticipation of it, is characteristic of our race. The quest for it, pathetic enough in any case, appears now in worthy, now in unworthy, forms. Its distorted or depraved manifestations are themselves significant of what is hidden in our being. Often it is observed in the shape of small ambitions, in personal or social vanities, or, again, in blatant self-assertion, or wild bursts of passion. Be the accepted channel of happiness what it may, there is a strain and struggle to make the most of it, and a refusal to be contented with little. A faculty is thereby indicated

which needs but to be rightly directed, needs to have an estimable object presented to it and apprehended by it; and then there is brought to light, not chiefly the littleness and perversity, but the greatness and infinite possibilities of man. Let there be but a noble purpose envisaged and pursued, and there is scope for the energy and devotion of a lifetime; and the more one succeeds in his high-minded endeavours, the more he is taught and qualified to progress. Perfection is craved, and one follows hard after it, even though it seems to recede to unapproachable heights and depths. In two main directions this ennobling activity is maintained. On the one hand, the external world is explored as far as may be to its furthest recesses, and its forces are subdued for the purposes of mankind: every unsolved problem in that material domain is a summons to renewed effort. On the other hand, man seeks to comprehend himself; and the times of greatest awakening and of the furthest advancement and of boundless hope have been those in which some new and hitherto unimagined depth was discovered in his nature, when he was taught anew to think much of himself and his capacities, was surprised by the living truth that was flashed upon him, and was urged to compass what seemed to the sense-bound understanding unattainable. Periods of renaissance ensued; fresh vistas were opened up, and the world in many respects was made new. But apart from actual successes, even the struggle to which he is incited exalts him, as was previously marked when the contest for pure morality or righteousness was discussed; thought and hope are maintained by it on a high level, and the light of the spirit is clarified. Whereas, if the struggle is abandoned at any point while there is the power of continuing it, this means that the best we have come to know in ourselves suffers grievously; everything within and without becomes dull, common, stale; petrifaction or decay of the mental

faculties sets in, and the loss of all that is most esteemed is imminent. Thus true life on earth in all its aspects is characterised by unrest, and this continues whatever progress has been made. But it is not an evil to which we are doomed, a fate to be lamented; this movement rather marks the process by which our being, otherwise so empty, is gifted with a rich possession; it shows that we are privileged to discover a supremely desirable object of life, and to bend towards it with the assurance of a real and growing appropriation. It sets before us, as continued experience proves, an object of inexhaustible fulness; it bespeaks an outlook to infinity, and the fitness of our nature to apprehend infinity. It helps to awaken and confirm the faith that an Infinite Power, distinct from ourselves, is actually present with us; since we are strongly held and influenced by what is inwardly discerned as we could not be by anything belonging merely to this earth, anything that is only finite, or by any mere thought or fancy of our own.

7. Lastly, *Reason* is recognised as filling a large place in our experience. There is a true life discerned as compared with that which is false; we have come to know reality of life, the kind that is full of *meaning*. What could be a higher, truer meaning for it than that which is grasped when it is taken to be a process leading up towards completed righteousness, towards full freedom, towards the dignity and power of the emancipated personality of man, to the things that feed the heart and preserve its hope, and which, as being inward and unseen, are proof against worldly assaults and cannot be moved? The intellect craves to have the light of reason thrown upon our earthly state, so that it may be manifest that meaning and purpose pervade it, and this legitimate desire is in large measure gratified as the moral end of human existence is acknowledged and magnified in practice. Right, as was previously

noted, claims to rule the world, and as we admit the claim and give effect to it, we acquire the faith that reason permeates the whole. Not that all is now recognised as manifestly reasonable even in detail. On the contrary, much is dark and unintelligible. But we persist in questioning that seemingly irrational side of things. We strive for the sole dominion of righteousness; we hold that the world as a whole is designed for this end; and this constrains us to believe that all its processes in particular must be capable of being adjusted to it, that all of them can be made to fall in with the consummation that ought to be, that all of them are replete with meaning, are rational. This faith does not spring from sense, but it is a real and very influential power in us and over us. It warrants the expectation of endless progress, and stimulates to endeavours for such progress, and without it stagnation might at any time set in, and all the brightest prospects of the race would be darkened and destroyed. This invisible power in us which contributes to mould experience, gains anchorage and full trustworthiness and efficacy only when we rise to the higher faith that Divine Wisdom is the ground and source of all that is, accounting for that correspondence which is found to exist between the world's processes as a whole and the purposes of our life, having made the world intelligible, and having gifted the race of men with intelligence to render the world translucent.

We can safely assume that the generality of our contemporaries in civilised lands know the power of such ideals as have been spoken of, whether they actually yield to it or not. They find that together with the powers of sense the influence of the unseen world enters their life with commanding effect. "The man who has no refuge in himself, who lives, so to speak, in his front rooms, in the

outer whirlwind of things and opinions, is not properly a personality at all; he is not distinct, free, original, a cause,—in a word, *some one*. He is one of a crowd, a taxpayer, an elector, an anonymity, but not a man. . . .

“He who floats with the current, who does not guide himself according to higher principles, who has no ideal, no convictions,—such a man is a mere article of the world’s furniture—a thing moved, instead of a living and moving being—an echo, not a voice. The man who has no inner life is the slave of his surroundings, as the barometer is the obedient servant of the air at rest, and the weather-cock the humble servant of the air in motion.”<sup>1</sup>

This knowledge which we have of ideals, of unseen things generally, if put forward as a rational basis for faith in God, might conceivably be objected to on two grounds. *First*, it might be asked in the language of philosophy, Is that supposed knowledge *objective*, of real value as knowledge? May it not be only subjective, phenomenal, having to do with a limited, superficial portion of experience, or be a possession of the individual only, undeserving, therefore, of having much significance assigned to it? The answer is that it belongs to our life, to what is deepest and most telling in it, and we know our own life as it really is. These thoughts and feelings we have been speaking of, unlike the objects of sense, exist only as they are known, only in the knowing, and so they are known as they are and not merely as they appear. And they are not slight or superficial, but normative. By means of them the mind takes up and applies for its uses what sense contributes. The ruling and shaping factor, which controls, and rightly controls, the life of sense, and can give the stamp of worth to the entire personality, is not itself of inferior significance. The ideals in question are fundamental and determinative;

<sup>1</sup> Amiel’s *Journal*, Mrs. H. Ward’s trans., p. 114.

they supply "axioms of life."<sup>1</sup> Then, too, they do not belong merely to the individual mind; they are shared by the race and by the generations at each different time, and civilisation grows with their growth. They are thus to be pronounced universal in their import.

Secondly, it may be said in the opposite sense that there is *in us* enough to satisfy the craving for perfect truth and goodness, without any assumption being required which involves a hazardous plunge or a leap in the dark. The human mind itself furnishes the ideal, and so it has enough without God. It must be replied that, though people can perceive those heights of possible attainment—and this they can do only occasionally—they themselves as a matter of fact stand on a very low level in comparison. They are dragged down by sense, which first obtained a firm hold upon them; they cannot conform for any lengthened period with unimpeded power, and with full effect to the requirements of their better mind; often their vision itself is clouded, and they have but faint glimpses of their goal and of the path to it, not to speak of an actual arrival. Especially when self clamours for the gratification of its ends, or when the world goes against them, or when its inequalities and pains are very glaring, or when they are disappointed with themselves, or oppressed by the thought of the earthliness and manifold shortcomings of the mass of men—at such times their better convictions seem to be only of the stuff of dreams. Instead of conviction there is now confusion as regards the highest topics, or an inward blank, or a disposition even to deny and disprove what had appeared to be beyond all price. On the other hand, it is not merely to some great height of goodness, it is to perfection that they aspire in their brighter and more hopeful days, and short of it they have

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion*, 1901, pp. 173, 181, and also p. 213 ff.

no rest; a light or power that reflects or brings down infinity, alarms them, attracts them, and will not leave them. But it is distinct from themselves, for they are certainly not infinite. Many can only regard the motions of the better spirit in them as an intrusion and offence and standing accusation; and the best who walk this earth find themselves on many an occasion completely humiliated by them—know their own deficiencies better, indeed, the farther they have pressed forward. In such circumstances self-sufficiency is sheer folly.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion we arrive at is that faith in God is at once reasonable, and the free choice of man's will. It is reasonable and not blind; it rests on ascertained deliverances of experience, on the most important facts with which we have to do. The best that is in us, the moral and spiritual part of our being, the element that controls and utilises material nature, is itself explained, preserved in vigour and developed towards completeness, when another Spirit is recognised that is kindred with our own, and present with us, but is Infinite, and so stirs our being to its depths, and continues repeatedly to do so throughout our time on earth. But there can be no compulsion, as of the intellectual order, necessitating religious faith. The facts which are founded on belong to the moral sphere, where freedom reigns and imparts to those facts their pre-eminent worth. The flight of the soul to God is so critical and momentous as it is, because this crowning act is itself the consequence of man's free choice, and proclaims his exercise of the chief privilege by far that is open to a finite being, namely, the voluntary apprehension of the Infinite.

<sup>1</sup> What one has excogitated for one's self (*Das Selbsterdachte*) is something arbitrary, which can either be retained or cast away. But what one requires from religion is just this, that it shall raise him above himself and his caprice, and place him on ground that is firm and trustworthy.—Paulsen, *Einleitung*, etc., p. 340.

He acts with reason, but with love and the assent of the will, not with passive constraint.

It may be said that proof is wanted, an argument of the peculiarly cogent, absolutely conclusive kind which philosophy is expected to supply. Philosophy seeks comprehensiveness and thoroughness; it gives an exhaustive statement of the relevant facts, and it exhibits them in their growth, and shows their unity, their relation to the knowing mind, and their connection with each other and with the world in which they appear. It thereby explains them, and in that fuller light which reason throws upon them their import is clearer, and the inference as to the truth of religion ought, it seems, to be perfectly sure. It is one of the chief and lasting merits of idealism, that it has vindicated to the full the rights of reason, has proved its inherent power to advance without limit in every sphere of thought. No external barrier can justly be set up in its path. Philosophy can be cast forth only by philosophy—an erroneous system only by a better; the attempt therefore to reject it *in toto* on grounds of reason, or to say thus far only can it go, leads to palpable absurdity. Accordingly, it has free scope in religion as elsewhere.

Yet, however far it progresses, it moves in the first instance on the lines which have been indicated in the present chapter, *i.e.* philosophy starts from the realities of life and experience, and draws conclusions which rest in the last resort on those realities. Its ultimate explanation of them makes religious faith seem reasonable to many people; to many others, again,—to the great majority even of educated people,—there is no assistance afforded by this means; to these last it is notorious that explanations are offered which vary more or less from each other, so that the acceptance of any particular system of metaphysics becomes an additional difficulty laid upon inquirers. The

obvious facts as presented in experience, the chief of which in their bearing on this subject have been referred to in some detail above, are for the latter class of minds the best ground that reason offers for trust in God. As in common affairs, and even in scientific thinking, they can pass directly from those given realities to the conclusion which may be drawn from them. After all, these two classes of people are essentially in the same position. Each of them has the philosophical mind; each contemplates the whole of experience with its visible and invisible elements, and seeks the interpretation. To each of them religion can appear reasonable, but to neither of them can the truth of religion be demonstrated. To the one class, affected as they are by the direct and positive influences of the modern world, God is an Infinite or Perfect Spirit, who is present and active among men; to the other section, who are led by metaphysic as far as it can take them, He is the Infinite Spirit, who is both transcendent and immanent. And neither class can dispense with voluntary choice in the matter of faith. It is vain to attempt to concuss the non-religious man into belief by philosophical reasoning, *e.g.* by maintaining that the idea of the subject or self, and that of the object or not-self, presuppose and imperatively demand the unifying idea of God. Or, again, though it may be observed that thought rises beyond every limit that can be set for it, and so reaches up to the infinite,—even though that truth may be clearly grasped, and helps to stimulate faith,—it is hazardous in the extreme to say that here there is a purely intellectual or philosophical ground on which one may conclude with unique and unquestionable assurance that God exists. It is not possible to coerce the understanding in this matter; and in the interest of religion itself, and in view of the sterling quality of faith as representing all that is best in man,—the feeling and the life, as well as the reason,—such an issue in philosophy is

not even desirable. Whatever endeavours are put forth to make faith in God appear reasonable, there is always a venture in the end, there is always an *act of will*.

The essential community of mind between the two classes of people just referred to is of special interest to us in another connection. There are those in great number who look with distrust, or with a sense of helplessness, on a system of metaphysic. But if they form a direct conclusion from the data or truths which are acknowledged by themselves, their reason, disciplined by science and general culture, is being applied substantially as it would be in following out the technical metaphysical system. Hence there can be the confidence that the religious convictions they form will not in the end be substantially altered by any conclusions of profounder research in philosophy. Changes and improvements there will be in our religious beliefs, as the fuller light of thought carries out the process of rational conviction in matters of faith ; but the haunting dread, once so common, that what might be called an intellectual crisis in one's life is in waiting, when it will be made apparent by philosophy that the work of one's previous years of faith proceeded on wrong lines, or at least that the whole requires to be accomplished *de novo*—that paralysing dread may be banished as groundless. There will be nothing of the nature of esoteric and exoteric forms of Christianity, even within the class of educated people ; there will be no specially enlightened section requiring temporarily to accommodate their higher knowledge, in preaching or in any other circumstances, to the sense-bound faith of their brethren. Distinctions of such a kind now strike us as both invidious and unwarrantable. Thinking people in general, all who are influenced by the spirit of the present time, find that religion cannot be held by them even temporarily as a faith which is clothed in forms of sense, and has been taken over passively from the fathers.

Criticism is applied forthwith to such forms—it might almost be said with the dawn of thought in the individual; and when faith begins, it is essentially and manifestly moral and spiritual, and is gradually developed in that character from stage to stage. But the procedure is such as can be carried on, and needs to be carried on, by a person of ordinary intelligence. It is akin to the prosecution of a practical science; it may indeed be said to be concerned with the science of living.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GENESIS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

THE transition to religious faith being of supreme significance, some further reference to the experimental process may be made, but the private and sacred character of it demands the fullest respect.

If one rises freely, in consequence of the operation in his life of such ideal influences as have been described, to the desire for God, for close personal converse with Him, and for that perfect goodness which is discerned as the truest blessing, and if one gives effect to the desire in the exercises of piety, there is no law of our being violated, and no experience falsified as one does so. On the contrary, man acts thus because he is prompted by the best and truest that is in him; his choice is in line with the wisest decisions he has ever made, and commends itself, indeed, to his sober judgment as superior to any of them. In that procedure he can be perfectly loyal to truth. He does not need to commit himself to positions that are not established as yet for him. He is not called upon to declare his firm belief in the definite articles of a creed, and will refrain in the meantime from doing so. To himself he is true as well as to other men; for in his own mind he realises the fact that for him the infinite world of the spirit is yet almost entirely wrapped in darkness; there is only, as it were, a point of light—though it is of amazing potency and boundless promise even as it is already observed. But he can

with sincerity regard himself as a seeker for spiritual gifts, and as one who has positive ground for hope, as he fixes his soul with earnest desire on God and on heavenly goodness, so far as he can apprehend them.

The fact that truth is strictly regarded in the case appears as we reflect, *e.g.*, on one of the commonest forms of the spiritual process, namely, the advance from morality to religion. We pass almost insensibly from the truth and the goodness that we know best, to positive faith in God: that faith is an apprehension of the highest truth, and therefore springs up and thrives in the light of truth, is not a thing of darkness. When once any moral rule or ideal is adopted in sincerity, the exacting claims of morality are borne in upon one; the richness and purity of the object that is contemplated tend to increase to the view, and seem to reflect the celestial fulness and glory of God. The goodness that is approved is as light thrown in upon one's inward nature, and the light shows the facts as they are, some of them being painful enough. Owing to the magnitude of the task of ordering the outward life aright, of being consistent in act, wrongs and shortcomings are apparent; and, owing to the extreme difficulty of regulating the desires of the heart, still more iniquity has to be deplored. The good and the evil that exist in combination are so thoroughly antagonistic to each other, that they cannot remain together in the mind and life of any one and allow him to be entirely at rest. It becomes evident that a mere arbitrary, fractional standard of life is in strictness no standard: a rule disallows irregularity. Thus the type or plan that has to be chosen for guidance can only be the purest righteousness that has ever dawned upon the person concerned; and in the attempt to fulfil it no single department of his conscious moral existence can safely be overlooked. Then, too, this highest pattern which is approved needs to be habitually reverted to and consulted. The task of ordering the life aright is

one of stupendous magnitude, it is the greatest work that man can undertake, as the slightest reflection will show. Obviously it is indispensable that one should look frequently and steadily at the object which is aimed at. No person can stumble into true goodness and consistency of character without thought and effort. If even concentration of mind together with the best endeavour falls short of the complete result, forgetfulness of the end to be desired must issue in egregious failure. The only procedure that warrants hope is that of the man who resolutely pursues his ideal object, and who makes sure by frequent glances that he knows his goal. And not to speak of the actual fulfilment of the more exacting demands of the law which is inwardly approved, much experience and discipline are required in order that there may even be a feeling for the higher and finer expressions of morality, an understanding and sincere appreciation of them. If the daily practice of life is kept on a low level merely, the very perception of the higher reaches of goodness and truth is beyond one's power of attainment. Without lengthened aspiration and honest effort to improve, no means exist for imparting such clearer vision.

But if one strives to be true to the right as he knows it, directs his view to the ideal of life that has commended itself to him, and frequently recalls it and aspires to it, he has reached a condition which to a great extent resembles the life of religion. His heart may be said to cry out for a perfect object of the unseen, spiritual or moral order, for a good which is above the common world and better than it. It is true, the thoughts that press into the mind which is so affected are different from those which are formed by the God-fearing person in the hour of prayer; the feelings, too, are by no means identical in the two cases. Nevertheless there is an important likeness and much common ground at the same time. The representatives of those

two classes of people are alike conscious of the insufficiency of the earth and of their own past attainment ; and in both instances the spirit projects itself towards a glorious unsearchable object, invisible, akin to the best that is in us, but perfect. That object is conceived, indeed, more justly by the one class than by the other, but each acknowledges its object in part, and neither comprehends it in its entirety ; even those who envisage it most plainly and who possess it most surely, as their faith apprehends God, recognise it as mounting to an infinite height above themselves and all other men. On the ground of this community of thought, feeling, and aspiration between the person who seeks to grasp a moral ideal and the avowed and sincere believer in God, it can be said that the advance from the condition of the former to that of the latter takes place in the normal course as an even process of development. The germ of the kingdom of God is "the least of all seeds" ; the line of demarcation between morality and religion is not to be fixed in practice ; the commencement of religious faith is imperceptible. It is even mysterious, like the beginning of all life, sacred from intrusion, not to be probed out of mere curiosity or even for purposes of study. But when the transition has distinctly occurred, man's spiritual longings have shaped themselves into conscious faith and conscious prayer for righteousness and for God. Such prayer is the first and principal sign and expression of spiritual life. Even in the case of those for whom the matter of ideals is more or less disquieting, and whose minds may not frequently revert to any standard whatever, the light has begun to shine, and often in their better moments they cannot choose but see or remember. At such times they have experienced the craving for the highest things of the spirit ; there is a real drawing towards them ; influential pressure is felt in the heart and conscience. Who can tell when that deep longing passes over into genuine prayer ?

The historical situation and antecedents of the dwellers in a civilised land like ours go far to determine or qualify the issue we are concerned with. A savage is led by the facts of the world to believe in higher powers; yet before men of purer faith than his own have come in contact with him, his religion continues to be of a degraded kind. Among us, however, the religious faculty is elicited to better purpose by the observation of the fruits of pure religion in many persons around us, by witnessing the peace, power, confidence, and higher life generally which it engenders. Prior to the life of religion in a person here and now, the power of faith is discerned by him in its riper, impressive effects in other people, effects by which their being is elevated and brought near to that standard of complete integrity which is honoured and sought by himself. If faith in God is acquired by such person in turn, it is like a conscious admission of what has been surmised or anticipated by him on good grounds on many an occasion in his past. It approves itself as the completion which is demanded by his best inward experience, and also by his observation of what is most praiseworthy in his fellow-men.

The final venture, it is true, in which one passes from a sincere recognition of righteousness and truth to faith in God, may seem hazardous, inasmuch as it could not be justified conclusively, the grounds for it could not be set forth with demonstration, to any and every intelligent person with whom the matter might conceivably be discussed. As it is essentially a private affair, it seems to be wanting in that general validity which is the characteristic of truth. But, as was previously observed (p. 82), the purer embodiments of morality themselves are beyond the power of perception of the person—and here we may add, however intellectual he may be—whose aims and practice in life have not been such as to furnish the

necessary qualification or insight ; and yet to the disciplined and sensitive mind their warrant is undoubted, being, indeed, identical with that which upholds the elementary principles of conduct. That faith in God, therefore, which closely resembles the choice of the purest righteousness, and is, in fact, intimately connected with it, may be equally well warranted, though there could be no confident and conclusive appeal to one's neighbour for his corroboration of the procedure by which the faith was attained. (And see p. 76 ff.)

In this acquisition of faith in God there is no violence done to any ascertained truth, or to the spirit of truth (so p. 80). No sacrifice of intellect is involved. No conclusion of science is questioned or compromised in any way ; no fact of experience is explicitly or implicitly denied. To aspire to a moral ideal is reasonable and praiseworthy, and to seek the God whom it is believed to reflect and declare is a proceeding that can raise no valid objection. There is no belief professed forthwith in a multitude of religious doctrines or propositions. Faith is chiefly as yet desire for light and help, and includes a glad hope in a God of all goodness, and a restful acquiescence in His righteous will. (It is held to be *righteous*, since man's will is urged to seek righteousness ; the pains in nature cease to be an insurmountable obstacle when regard is had to the surest knowledge we possess, knowledge, moreover, which relates to the last and crowning product of the world, namely, the human will.) Such faith, as is seen from the circumstances in which it appears, is not a blind, irrational feeling, but a reasonable trust. The highest morality is reasonable ; the choice of the highest goodness is wisdom, the fine flower of intelligence, being reason not in the form of abstract knowledge, but as directly applied for the regulation and moulding of

life. Hence, as faith in God follows upon that choice, and is in intimate connection with it, faith is not a product of blindness, but has as one of its elements and concomitants the best kind of intellectual activity, the knowledge which is wisdom.

## PART II

# RELIGION AS AN ESTABLISHED FACT OF LIFE



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SPRING-TIME OF FAITH

#### I

WHEN a person intelligently and freely commits his cause in all sincerity to God, resolved with His help to give effect to His righteous will, he gains a faith that continues amid all changes. The faith does not then come and go (cf. p. 74). It is now settled on a fixed foundation. It is not simply real when visible blessings abound, or when the mind is unclouded, or when light and joy and sweetness as from heaven fill the chamber of the soul. It survives and becomes confirmed when trials and troubles thicken around. The man of faith knows that he has one and only one sure refuge, and to it he has recourse without fail; and never has he cause to regret doing so, never is he long without a rich supply of good. The faith remains alike in joy and in sorrow, in success and failure, and in all temptation. It is made plain that crosses are indispensable for preserving and developing it, and for strengthening and refining the character of the man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is of the essence of *Heathenism* to cultivate religion for the sake of worldly good. God nowhere indeed left Himself without

Accordingly it has to be said that the truth-loving soul, by simply having recourse in living faith to its God, and without being burdened with a load of "beliefs," obtains in large measure that inward rest, security, and plentiful benefit which are justly associated with the gospel. Such person is forthwith in his degree a recipient of gospel blessings. In this connection the following passage from

witness : the very heathen knew Him. As some one has pointed out in reference to Plato, if it were said that the want of *true* religion in his case was fatal, or that such religion as he had was as good as none, it might be replied that since his thought and his ideal of life were of the loftiest species, it would appear that *true* religion is of little value, or not necessary for man. Christianity itself presupposed a knowledge of God and a craving for God on the part of Jews and *Gentiles*. But in heathenism, as a whole, we note that there is a great lack of goodness. Sin is not effectually overcome ; there is not that gift of liberty and that glad delight in the spiritual God and in righteousness which a purer faith confers, and which empowers men to fight valiantly and hopefully in all circumstances, however trying, for the fulfilment of the Divine will. Religion is maintained and valued so long as it is understood to promote one's earthly welfare, but no longer. The world and sense are too strong for the primitive virtues that are engendered ; it is an essential characteristic of a heathen nation to be, as it were, in a position of unstable moral equilibrium ; and when it falls over, all the members are sure to be submerged ; the better life of every one who is reared in the impure conditions is stifled. The religious systems of heathenism were and are quite defective, and the individuals depend ultimately on the system ; even genius and worth, creative and masterful as they are, presuppose certain conditions from which they cannot be detached ; they cannot spring up and shine forth in a very corrupt state of society, not to speak of redeeming it. Thus, because righteousness was but little known and appreciated, and could not be lastingly maintained against the far stronger powers of the world and the flesh, as corruption set in and struck deep, the opportunity to hold fast the knowledge of God, and to gain a fuller knowledge of God, was practically taken away from the people as a whole. God, it is true, still supplied the witness of Himself : the sun did not cease to shine, nor the rain to fall, nor the earth to give forth its fruit in its season. The testimony to Him and His working existed, but there was no inclination, and soon almost no faculty, to interpret and apply it. It was the same in effect as if the testimony had been blotted out.

Religious faith is steadfast, immovable, planted on a firm foundation, only when it becomes a definite choice of God and of pure righteousness for their own sake.

Principal Caird comes home to us with convincing force, and there are many pages in the chapter from which it is quoted that are couched in the same lofty and effective strain, taking us from the region of debatable or temporary theory to that of living and enduring fact:—

"It may be said to be the essential characteristic of religion as compared with morality, that it changes aspiration into fruition, anticipation into realisation; that instead of leaving man in the interminable pursuit of a vanishing ideal, it makes him the actual partaker of a divine or infinite life. Whether we view religion from the human side or the divine—as the surrender of the soul to God, or as the life of God in the soul; as the elevation of the finite to the infinite, or as the realisation of the infinite in the finite—in either aspect it is of its very essence that the infinite has ceased to be merely a far-off vision of spiritual attainment, an ideal of indefinite future perfection, and has become a present reality. God does not hover before the religious mind as a transcendental object which it may conceive or contemplate, but which, wind itself ever so high, it must feel to be for ever inaccessible. The very first pulsation of the spiritual life, when we rightly apprehend its significance, is the indication that the division between the spirit and its object has vanished, that the ideal has become real, that the finite has reached its goal and become suffused with the presence and life of the Infinite. . . . Oneness of mind and will with the Divine mind and will is not the future hope and aim of religion, but its very beginning and birth in the soul. . . . In that act which constitutes the beginning of the religious life—call it faith, or trust, or self-surrender, or by whatever name you will—there is involved the identification of the finite with a life which is eternally realised. It is the elevation of the spirit into a region where hope passes into certitude, struggle into conquest, interminable effort

and endeavour into peace and rest. . . . The whole future of the religious life is given in its beginning, but it is given implicitly, as a principle which has yet to unfold its hidden riches and its all-subduing power. The position of the man who has entered on the religious life is that which pious thought expresses when it speaks of having put off the old man and put on the new, of being dead and having our life hid with Christ in God, of faith being counted for righteousness, of sin being no longer imputed to him who believes. The form of the old or finite life is still present to such an one, the raw material of natural desire and affection is far from being wholly wrought up by the transforming power of the divine principle that is now dominant within; but in so far as it remains unassimilated, it is present as a thing foreign, alien to the true self with which in the inmost spirit of his being he is identified. Evil, error, imperfection do not really belong to him; they are excrescences which have no organic relation to his true nature: they are already virtually, as they will be actually, suppressed and annulled, and in the very process of being annulled they become the means of spiritual progress. Though he is not exempt from temptation and conflict, though the shame and pain of temporary defeat may often mark the strife with evil, these belong but to the vanishing form of his outward and temporal life: in that inner sphere in which his true life lies, the struggle is over, the victory already achieved. . . . Even when we pray that evils may cease, it is, if our prayer be the prayer of faith, because in spirit we realise that they have already ceased, because we are in a sphere in which we discern the nothingness of all that is not of God: even when we pray that new blessings may be communicated to us, it is because we realise that already all things are ours.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Principal Caird, *Introduction to the Phil. of Religion*, new ed., pp. 280-88.

There is very much in religious history, literature, and experience that bears out the truth of the statements in the quotation just given. Times without number, it has been testified that a spiritual process which seems in itself of the slightest significance is fraught with immeasurable consequences to man. On the Divine side, a word, as it were, spoken to the heart of man, is all-powerful in effecting its restoration and healing, or the Divine action is compared to a light touch, or again it is described as the breath of God upon the human soul. And on man's side an answering look, an earnest desire, a hunger for God and for righteousness, a motion of the will ("I will arise, and go"), are found to suffice for the attainment of a large portion of the priceless blessings of religion. There is forthwith rest and plenty for the soul; it has actually apprehended its object, one that is Infinite and Perfect; it is anchored therefore to what is immovable and Eternal, united to One from whom boundless goodness is to be derived. Sin itself, though a terrible reality, cannot prevent one from acknowledging this transcendent truth, and exulting in this other and infinitely glorious reality. This being so, it becomes apparent that the peculiar kind of benefit of which the gospel speaks is already in a great degree participated in; though the gospel provides much more than is yet understood, what is already known is in line with its highest teaching; its fullest offer being a benefit which includes rest for the soul, restoration to God, the unburdening of the heart to Him in prayer, delight in Him and in His righteous and merciful nature plainly imaged, well-grounded hope and confidence in spite of the fact of sin. Indeed, it may well be said that, in consequence even of the earlier and incomplete possession, the world has been put under one's feet.

This will be apparent if we consider more closely some of the manifestations of that life of faith which has just

emerged within the soul. It might seem, perhaps, to be only something of slight significance that had been experienced, so far as any substantial effects are concerned, an impulse of the mind resembling many others that have sprung up and had their time, quickly formed and as quickly subsiding. What is to succeed that first spiritual movement? How is prayer, beyond a few words or phrases, to be framed by one who has been, perhaps, long unaccustomed to it? Where are the necessary ideas and a suitable vocabulary to be got? And what certain benefit is to be obtained, what important purpose of life would be served, even if one succeeded in moulding a number of thoughts in what seemed the proper form? Even if the course of life which has been indicated were begun, would there be the requisite power and encouragement to continue in it all one's days?

Now, God and true righteousness are recognised as objects of incomparable excellence; they stand out far above all else that we can contemplate; the desire for them, once awakened, is not like an ordinary whim that is soon abandoned; they may, indeed, be again forgotten amid the cares and temptations of life, but this is not inevitable, nor should it be supposed to be natural or likely; and if it does happen, it will not, in the normal case, be for long. The craving for a perfect good, for the perception of a worthy object in life, for manly strength to do the right and to endure hardship, and for solid comfort in a restless, trying world, is deep and intense; and this, together with the sense of vanity in all things visible on the earth when taken by themselves, and of disappointment whatever direction one turns to there, tends to keep the heart attached to the invisible. It is the one and only choice that presents an altogether glorious object, and is abundantly promising. The friendless person has a Friend that fills the void in his inward being, and with

whom it is a unique pleasure and benefit to meet in seclusion.

The world, too, assumes a new complexion ; a glory returns to it.

“ God’s in His heaven,—  
All’s right with the world ! ”

A change has come over the mind of the man, and he sees the world with other eyes ; it had often been gloomy, repulsive, or terrifying before, but it now begins to be as the garden of the Lord. Nature is as if filled with God, with goodness and with love. Its various objects are as links to join one to Him. There is a sense of peace pervading all material things, and the very stillness is eloquent. The mind that begins to gain a faith is apt at learning that “ there is a spirit in the woods.” Through His visible works God speaks, and the quickened soul hears with delight, and in silence pours itself out in response to Him. Nature is fresh, the senses are keen, and the soul has been newly stirred ; everything tends to produce a vivid and memorable impression. Here there is no felt dependence on tradition, or on any human channel of communication ; one has to do with observed facts and immediate convictions ; the causes that awaken doubt either do not intervene or they are completely neutralised. And the earth’s surface, presenting to view hill and vale, waters, trees and flowers, beasts and birds, and diversified by the succession of the seasons, has an abundant store of gifts to convey to the susceptible soul ; and to this must be added the wonders of the heavenly bodies scattered over space. From this material source alone the heart is fed with a wealth of good ; it is filled already with God’s praise. Wordsworth or Ruskin is probably selected as an exponent of the phenomena of Nature, since they read her signs with a trained eye and with the grace of soul that can spiritualise them. This practice of rising in thought from things seen

to the unseen and spiritual is continued without difficulty ; rather, with ardour and delight—in all the years to come, throughout the later avowedly Christian life. The earlier religious contemplation of nature is therefore quite harmonious with the maturer Christian conception. Even in the opening time faith contracts a view of the visible earth which is never afterwards abandoned ; even at first one enters far into the permanent Christian habit.

But religious impressions and convictions, stimulated by Nature, in the devout soul, while they are cheering and elevating, are yet vague and insufficient from the moral point of view. There is an inward cry for the God who is altogether holy, and for union with Him in righteousness ; and other means are needed, beyond what Nature offers, to satisfy this desire, and even to assist one in the utterance of it. Ideas and language are required in reference to the spiritual and holy God, and bearing on that pure goodness which is in Him, and which the soul ardently seeks as a personal possession for itself. Now the Psalms of the Old Testament are available for this very purpose : they supply the necessary matter and expression ; they were first struck off in the glow of pious emotion by men who had a similar experience to that of the person who now aspires towards God ; and so the reading of them with earnest, sympathetic mind is still the means of enabling one to utter forth what is deepest within oneself.<sup>1</sup> And there is the great advantage that in these ancient prayers there are not, in the main, any matters of doctrine introduced, such as might cause one to hesitate or stumble. The Jews, while looking back to Abraham, "the father of the faithful," and while faith in God and in His goodness to their race was the root-element of their

<sup>1</sup> The question of Biblical Criticism does not arise as yet. For these Psalms are manifestly heart-felt utterances of God-fearing men, and it matters little who they were or what their precise circumstances and date.

religion, had yet no *Confession of Faith*, detailed and dogmatic, as understood by us: they were bound by their *law*.<sup>1</sup> The Psalms spring directly from the heart, and are the perennial language of the spiritual man addressed to the spiritual God. The soul of the present-day suppliant is itself thoroughly engaged and edified in the earnest perusal of them, very much as when at a later time original petitions of one's own are freely put up. For there is a great variety of Psalms corresponding to the manifold needs and varieties of the soul—its cravings, doubts, hopes, sorrows, fears, and joys; and the personal activity of the reader of them is shown by the fact that he *chooses* at each time what suits his circumstances, chooses because he can adopt the substance as his own, as spiritual food which is appropriate and nourishing to him. Unconsciously he reads something of his own thought into them. So, too, there are hymns available and other devotional literature in great abundance suited for the initial stage of faith. And when once the spirit of prayer has been awakened by such means, and when the fire has been fanned to a flame, the transition is easily effected which leads to the fullest expression of one's own most private feelings in one's own words. There is nothing wanting, therefore, in the way of effectual help to him who is thoroughly in earnest, however meagre his capacities in this sphere at first seemed to be, or however deficient his practice may actually have been. There is a wealth of means at his disposal, resulting, when honestly used, in abundant comfort and streams of blessing.

## II

But it will doubtless be felt that the chief desideratum is *Power* to lead a worthier life, to overcome sin and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wernle, *The Beginnings of Our Religion*, Germ. ed., 1901, p. 192 f.

temptation, and to conceive and mount up towards the ideal of existence in the common routine of the world. Does such faith as has been described prove its value by imparting this power? That is the grand test, for true happiness is impossible without growth in true righteousness; and to be engrossed with any visions of bliss which are unaccompanied by moral reformation would be but to feed the soul with unpractical delusions, and might mean little more than a hurtful species of indulgence. Now, at first view it may appear that the power to alter conduct for the better is lessened rather than increased by the introduction of the religious spirit. For it may well seem that too much is then exacted, nothing less than perfection having to be aimed at. The religious injunction might be compared to the exhortation to learn all science—a desirable attainment, perhaps, yet not to be thought of. Far better, one is often disposed to say, for practical people to aspire to something which is nearer our present level, and which it would not be hopeless for flesh and blood to affect. Yet this is a mistaken view. Religious worship stimulates for good every power that we possess. Even weak as we are, we can at once *worship* the very best, and, indeed, we can worship nothing else. Lower the object by introducing any known imperfection or deficiency, and the worship as a matter of course ceases. We know that it does not deserve to be worshipped; we see something better than it, namely, the excellence without the blots; we can worship an altogether glorious Being alone. Already this capacity for worshipping the best bespeaks an enormous power, and one that is full of promise. For when the spirit of true religion or worship is upon one, the whole nature is, for the time at least, on the side of righteousness; every temptation can then be effectually resisted, every duty performed with comparative ease. The well of the heart becomes clear on every occasion of earnest worship, and

so the stream that flows out of it is also pure. Ideal goodness and it alone inflames the soul and awakens enthusiasm, brings one into captivity to the law of holiness. The heart is always in the governing position ; thus the actions dictated by it when it is principally animated by the love of God are in accordance with His righteous will. In this way the force of sin, once held to be indomitable, is found again and again to be overcome. It signifies very much that the prestige of the evil power is gone. The old position of hopelessness is abandoned : whereas it was once taken for granted that our life must be chiefly characterised by wickedness or ruinous imperfection to the close, and it was regarded as useless, therefore, to try to improve matters, there is no longer any supposition of the kind. What soldier is faint-hearted or finds his arm nerveless, when the enemy, once dreaded as totally irresistible, is observed to be overthrown again and again, to be smitten severely, though he is not dead ? This is precisely the happy position of the sincere worshipper. The better nature is frequently made easily victorious. It is fed, and its capabilities are increased day by day in communion with God, and so the seasons of full strength, when there is a passion for righteousness, frequently recur ; while the lasting hatred of sin, the settled resolution to give it no encouragement, reduces its might, and it is seen to lead a dying life. The complete result which is sought belongs, of course, to the future ; but already in the hour of true devotion and of action consistent with it the goal of moral victory is discerned, and often, as it were, actually grasped. The necessary power to order our actions aright is thus in large measure secured. There is a new zest in life when the hopeless beaten spirit becomes hopeful, has the confidence that righteousness ought to be and can be realised, and actually finds it coming in as the waves of the sea. There is a new

manhood, a returning self-respect. Such person is thrice himself.

That strength which is imparted to the God-fearing, and which is stored up as the fruit of long-continued faithfulness in the work and drudgery of their lot, is not fully known by them in ordinary circumstances. But let them be involved in sudden peril, and they receive a strange disclosure or increase of their power, as many have testified. Nothing is then too great to do or to suffer; they may be truly said to be able to overcome the world. The man of piety and integrity, having his inmost being touched by the power of God, learns that there is no duty, nothing that is right for one in his place and circumstances, which it is beyond his power to do, no hardship which it is beyond his power to bear. Let a duty be admitted, and in his case an equivalent faculty is humbly but confidently exercised. The concrete historical instances of the martyrs, burning at the stake or otherwise done to death for their faith, exemplify the insuperable might conferred by genuine piety when appearing at its best. Now, God's contact with the soul is realised by many who live in peaceful times, and are not called to the martyr's crown. The same Divine influence that fortified the martyrs in their need animates the faithful still, imparting whatever power is required. It is the sober truth that no limit can be set to the power which one under the influence of religious emotion can put forth (Professor James, *Gifford Lectures*, Edinburgh). And there is a complete distinction between this healthful, world-conquering faculty and a reckless fanaticism such as even savages may exhibit. It must always be applied in a good cause; the fitness of things, the just calls on the individual, must be regarded; the natural ways and means must be carefully calculated by the reason, and wisely requisitioned; there must be no presumptuous reliance on God or vain self-trust. He that

has confidence in a present God, and shows it by adopting the safeguards which God in nature has put at his disposal, may rest assured that his heart will be girt with strength such as will enable him to do and endure everything that will be required of him in the providence of God.

### III

The *Intellect*, in turn, is enlightened on the attainment of faith. The devout soul finds itself, by comparison with its irreligious life, to be a clear soul. A world that was meaningless begins to fall into order. Religion from its very nature involves the activity of the intellect. Religion is conversant with truth, and is anything but a dallying with pleasing fictions. Remove the groundwork of truth and it collapses like any other baseless fabric. One is not called upon and is not warranted to worship God ignorantly; we must know what we worship. Just because religion is such a rich and beneficial possession as experience shows it to be, the man of faith naturally and instinctively applies his reason with zest to the question of the truth of what he holds, having the greatest possible interest in doing so: the person who is taking over a valuable piece of property is more concerned than any other can be to make sure as to the genuineness of the title-deeds. The intellect then is not dulled by a spiritual faith; in respect to one sphere of interest at least, and that the highest, it is quickened into unwonted activity; a wealth of new, lofty, invigorating thoughts is attained, and the lines of spiritual truth are found to reach out in all directions and to be endless.

The special thoughts or convictions which are held in faith are referred to God as giving them sanction; they are grounded on His eternal being; the truths which are apprehended are taken over as from *Divine Revelation*.

Faith such as has been spoken of presupposes *Revelation* ; faith is nothing without God, and God, too, as present with man, enlightening him and raising him up to his best condition. It was fundamental, ruling convictions of experience, as we saw, that were originally the means of drawing the soul to God ; they could only be understood when He was regarded as sustaining and developing them. They suggested Him, spoke of Him with effect ; through them He became known as a living, present, influential reality. They are justly viewed, then, as a means of revealing Him. Through them there is a *Revelation* of Him, partial, indeed, but yet of value as far as it goes. And as He is acknowledged as Infinite, the ground of all that is, God over all, the earth is His ; all of good that it reports or conveys to the soul is rightly recognised as derived from Him : this also is a part of *Revelation*. There is thus a revelation of God both in man and in nature. Not that every thought or conclusion of one's own, even in the sphere of religion, can claim to have this loftiest sanction. But as the return to God implied His felt presence and the exercise of His power, we have the sure knowledge that that return is His will ; furthermore, that the great principles of life which pointed to Him have His approval. We have knowledge based on revelation regarding the chief end of existence ; and everything that furthers that end, that inclines to worship, to meditation on God and the love of God, and to the fulfilment of that righteousness which is the primary formative rule, and also the latest, most Godlike outcome of experience, we safely accept as having the same heavenly warrant. Correction will often be required for the beliefs that are entertained ; it is part of the service to be rendered to God that thought must be strenuously, if tentatively, applied to them. Yet one is not doing that work in spiritual darkness ; one advances in light which is traced to the one permanent celestial source ;

if it is but the dawning light, it presages and prepares for the better day ; there is the means of detecting error and ascertaining truth, and of progressing towards the fullest truth.

And again, as will be explained later, though there is the sure support of Revelation for incipient faith, and man feels utterly helpless if he stands alone and unaided, there is no presumptuous claim to understand the deep things of Scripture, or much of Scripture. For the most part Scripture may be as yet as a sealed book, and Christ, so far as one's consciousness testifies, may be an entire stranger. In falling back on Revelation, we keep to the ground of truth and experienced fact, and, indeed, have a surer perception of truth than ever. This sobriety of mind, coupled with the insight and courage supplied by Revelation, gives the best promise of an effectual appropriation of the highest truth of Scripture in process of time.

Here it may be well to consider a peculiarity of the thoughts which are revolved by the understanding of the godly person as such, as he proceeds at the early stage of faith to shape his life in the world. There is a common misconception on the subject which is fruitful of harm. It is often supposed that he has to be incessantly on the watch against the thought or suggestion of evil, and this constant watching appears to the hesitating outsider or unbeliever to be a new task, and a very exacting one ; it seems to be an excessive burden and infliction. If the call is to be always on the watch against thoughts of evil, against temptations or enemies lurking on every side, it is one which seems to distract from work and from rest and reasonable recreation. It seems, in view of its magnitude, enough to demand one's whole attention, and is calculated to inspire continual fear.

But the pious person is under no obligation to watch

only for sin and temptation, and to assume that as there is danger hidden almost everywhere, he constantly requires to look for it, and to stand like an armed man waiting for it. In that case there would almost necessarily be a feverish anxiety which would be subversive of the peace he ought carefully to cultivate. He should watch for good more than for evil, and then, on gaining a perception of the good, and acquiring an ardent love for it, he dismisses with comparatively little trouble the thought of evil. Much of the goodness, grace, and glory of God and of His law is sure to be unfolded to everyone who holds converse with Him and watches for the light of His truth. There are exemplary people in endless variety in the world and in history, who have embodied the Divine law in great measure in their lives, and who supply abundant matter for reflection and models for adaptation to one's own circumstances. The best thought is stimulated as we admire them and try to learn of them. There is no occasion to be anxious while thus watching; anxiety does but prevent the bestowal of the benefit. It is the soul attuned to faith and hope and peace that is open to the truth in this sphere. The intellectual and moral watching required does not, then, involve disturbance or any degree of restlessness; it is not an added burden, an unwelcome duty. One is on the outlook for what is purest, strongest, and most comforting. That is a privilege and pleasure; and when the blessing is imparted, it saves from temptation; the temptation that might otherwise have been dangerous has lost its glamour, pales before the brighter light. But one should not of set purpose bring sin and temptation into one's thought, should not be on the watch for them in such a way as to conjure them up and in a manner create them. It is well known that many a person who goes near the edge of a dangerous precipice is apt to be seized with a strange feeling that prompts him to throw himself over. It should be a warning

to keep at a distance from such a spot, and not by one's own act to enter into danger. So it frequently is, too, if one goes in thought near to the brink of sin, watches for the sinful conception or purpose, brings it into one's mind, and tries to remember it, even though this is done in order to oppose the wrong. A desperate situation is apt to arise; the person actually enters into temptation, and may readily suffer. He both dwells upon sin and also feels that he ought not to dwell upon it, that its continued presence to thought defiles him. The very watching for it has made him in a manner helpless, till some moral pollution and loss seem unavoidable. Safety lies in refusing to court the danger, in keeping away from it as far as possible. One should not deliberately think of any evil, should not watch for it for any purpose, should rather let the understanding be engrossed with the thoughts of God, righteousness and truth. These will soon be discovered to be so numerous and so exalted, so wonderful and perennially fresh, that, what with them and the plans and duties relating to one's work in the world, there is no want of suitable matter for the purposes of the intellect, and there is neither time nor desire to entertain ideas that are corrupting. Doubtless it is only when the thoughts have begun to go out to the Person of Christ, as the soul's Redeemer and the principal object we can conceive, that the full wealth offered by the spiritual world to the intellect is realised: as we shall see later, there is a *Christian way*, a course which is in conformity with the mind of Christ, that every man ought to follow day by day; and the question what that Christian standard is for each person, in its special application to the individual, and for every society, affords endless scope for the most careful thinking. But even before the man of faith has advanced so far as to envisage the Person of Christ, there are many of the broad lines of morality which he can trace out in the light that God gives,

and which he can apply with joy to the practical regulation of life.

It does not follow from the fact that the thoughts of the God-fearing man are intentionally directed only to what is right and good, that sin is ignored by him or held to be of little or no account. The object is to eradicate sin in the most effectual manner, by taking to oneself the plentiful means which God has supplied, by resolving and striving to keep the heart clean, a habitation of loveliness, a temple meet for God. Undoubtedly, when all has been done, sin often gains an entrance into the heart and life; the time will again and again be known when its dimensions seem boundless and its power overwhelming. Yet such exceedingly distressing thoughts are not lasting and dominant. Renewed approaches to God in penitence and faith restore peace and an outpouring of blessing, and there remain the duty and comfort of reflecting on the ways of heavenly wisdom, storing the mind with wholesome principles, feeding the imagination on the purest ideals, and habituating oneself to delight in such truths alone, and to give effect to them in practice in the deeds done in the life. Thus by assiduously fostering only the better side of our being, by setting the soul to think only of what is lofty and invigorating, and by training the will, we starve the element of sin, and it becomes a vanishing power. The great stream of thought that runs daily through the mind is, as regards the main contents of it, a hallowed and gladdening stream. What is the nature of it in the case of the irreligious or earthly-minded man? For the stream in some form must flow on. Whether the thoughts are fixed on moral evil or on objects which are relatively good but not the best that might have been chosen, there is small comfort to be drawn from them. The suspicion that the chief end of life has been missed, that the golden opportunity for becoming righteous, spiritual, and supremely blessed, is

being allowed to pass,—the recurring dread that such an issue is possible,—is enough to cloud one's whole existence. Let it not be imagined that the man of faith more than other men cherishes undesirable and depressing thoughts such as take away all natural zest from life. On the contrary, while he knows sin, and that more truly than others do, he and he alone ceases to find himself chargeable at every turn with the dark and hateful catalogue of his offences; he and he alone knows a power of goodness which swamps the sin, goodness which is many-sided, captivating, sanctioned by God, a reflection of His infinite and eternal glory, an all-sufficient gift enjoyed in communion with Him.

Here is a result of much significance. Contrary to an inveterate belief on the part of multitudes, the main complexion of the inner life of faith is pleasing; the ideas entertained and preserved are such as the reason confirms and the heart welcomes. And the texture of the spiritual life is of a piece throughout: as will appear later, there is a correspondence with that glad opening time in the view of Christ's Person as the "Light of the world," the "brightness of the Father's glory," and even (where it is less to be expected) in the view of Christ's Cross, as a sight that chiefly attracts, pacifies, and gladdens, and does not merely afflict or repel.

#### IV

While the Reason is actively engaged from the commencement of the religious process, it must be admitted that in the first instance it is mainly *Feeling* that is exercised and gratified. One communes with the purest and loftiest object, believed on grounds of reason to be real; and a new, transporting love is engendered in consequence. If, then, it is asked what actual benefit ensues

from entering on the spiritual path which has been described, the reply is that the heart is filled with good, and that the satisfaction of the heart is what all men are ever striving for, but, so long as they depend on worldly means alone, fail to achieve. And if it seems, from the point of view of mature and robust religion, that a faith which affects mainly and almost exclusively the emotions of the heart is weak and fit only to be despised, it should be borne in mind that at every stage of the spirit's development the demand is made, and with justice, that religion shall be above all a thing of the heart. This is one main condition securing that it shall be a sound and genuine faith, a reality and not a mere form. Much has to be done in training the intellect and the will; there remain hard tasks in ordering the whole life in genuine righteousness, and also in ascertaining the undoubted truth of many things in religion, the manifold truths by which it commends itself as supplying a good which is eternal. But there is matter for thankfulness in the fact that for a while one is spared these exacting efforts, and is fortified for them by rich benefits conferred on the affections. It is a happy circumstance that the way is smoothed at the outset, and that an experience is furnished which will be a sustaining memory in later times of trial. One is thus induced in all the future years to watch for good rather than evil, is disposed to look at the bright side of things, and even in days of spiritual darkness or despondency to look where the light should be and to expect its coming, holding to the conviction derived from the suggestions of past experience, that there is goodness and mercy underlying all that is. Even in the interest of sterling and invincible righteousness, which may be regarded as the chief thing to be desired for man, and in order to the establishment of that larger truth which sets us free, it is to be accounted a wise arrangement that secures at the outset the warm attachment and devotion of the heart to

the things of God. For thus the greatest encouragement is gained for persevering in face of all obstacles in the pursuit of these moral and intellectual ends. There is the lasting confidence that all such exertion will be well spent, and that its fruit will be blessedness.

## V

It may readily appear that time and trouble, beyond what the mass of men in these days can afford to expend, are demanded for the successful pursuit of the course of faith ; in particular, that it means an added study of a very exacting kind. Now, there is in reality no heavy task imposed on anyone's resources. No great variety of strange or recondite topics needs to be kept in mind ; indeed, much could not be retained or grasped at the outset by any attempt, however strenuous. One has recourse to God in all simplicity, and aspires to goodness so far as it is discerned and sincerely and warmly appreciated. Then, too, the time for prayer must in ordinary circumstances be brief ; we are soon taught the need and duty of passing quickly from it to the proper calls of the day. The things we crave for, even though spiritual, are to be realised in this world. Prayer accordingly implies labour. Work is presupposed in true prayer for righteousness ; he only seeks the necessary assistance in sincerity from God who has previously striven for righteousness with honest endeavour on his own part, and has failed to attain it. There could be no fervent petition, or one that would avail, if there had been no previous effort to secure the object in question—if it had been treated in practice as worthless. There is an intimate connection between true work and true prayer ; we can hardly have the one without the other ; *orare est laborare*. Then prayer itself is an act, not mere feeling or sentiment ; it is the *offering up* of our desires to God ; there

is a bending and aspiration of the Will. And the objects contemplated are acknowledged to be real and most valuable, but not to be embodied as yet in the life as they ought to be. The true reality is seen to be normative for the habit of life, but to clash painfully with it as it actually exists ; it is an enduring light, a standing summons to man to exert his best powers to remodel his experience. It thus appears that there is no ground for the common objection or dread, that the practice of prayer would interfere greatly with one's worldly vocation. What springs from previous endeavours to do well, and is itself a form of activity, and issues in a clear and loud call to righteous work in the world, should not be regarded with aversion by the active man. Activity is presupposed by it, is the breath of life to it, and is its precious effect, and is, strictly speaking, never in abeyance. It follows that as a rule only a little time is necessary for the direct exercises of religion. If prayer is long continued, the thoughts wander, become dreamy and languid ; the activity is at an end. The duty then is to leave it off, and in the spirit of it, and with a heightened sense of power and responsibility, to give effect to the worldly calls. Thus the time required is not more than the busiest person could spare ; and if given, it is for all his main purposes the most profitable beyond comparison that he spends.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LIMITATION OF INITIAL FAITH

#### I

COMPARATIVELY few of the great articles of religion have as yet been touched upon, and this because the seeker for truth or reality in matters of faith has at the outset of his religious life no apprehension or understanding of the general body of them. He has been represented simply as turning to God in sincere trust and aspiring to true righteousness. His attainment in the field of faith may seem but little in itself, and, compared to all the commonly recognised truths which are comprehended within the scope of religion, it is indeed limited. And yet in effect it is of vast dimensions. A word, as it were, from God has been spoken, and it is enough to recall the soul to life and to create a great hope. It is remembered; it is thus a source of support in later days, and, indeed, in all the future life. As has been already observed, there is forthwith a participation in what may be called gospel blessings.

But as yet nothing is grasped with the confidence of genuine faith on such matters as the Person of Christ, the Divine Authority of Scripture, the purpose and effect of Christ's Death on the Cross, the question of a life beyond the grave, etc., etc. It could not well be otherwise. Shall one who aspires to a religion which is upheld not merely by the word of man, but by the witness of God and the answering judgment of one's own soul, acquire a real

belief in all those subjects which have been mentioned, and in many others like them; shall one truly appropriate an extensive and complete body of doctrine, on first lifting up the soul in sincerity to God? It is utterly incredible that he should. The subjects are enormous in their reach and compass, and a miracle such as cannot now be looked for would be requisite for such a purpose as that supposed. It is to magnify the faith when we say that it cannot thus be taken over forthwith in its entirety. There was a time, prior to the age of science and criticism, and when the vastness of truth, both sacred and secular, as now realised, was hardly dreamt of, when there seemed to be nothing incongruous in the requirement that the faith in its full compass should at once be accepted by each and all. The Athanasian Creed, or an equivalent to it, taking people at a bound to the mysteries of the constitution of the God-head, had to be believed as it stood, on pain of certain perdition. At this day the demand is harsh and repellent. But apart from such extreme pronouncements, the cause of religion may be prejudiced, and its success lessened, by any kind of teaching that represents faith as a product which is, as it were, instantly completed, even though it has to do with the sublimest truths that have been imparted by God to man. Too often it has been said, expressly or in effect, that the faith that is necessary and sufficient for man, namely, faith in Christ and His Cross, must be secured as if by a single step. In a moment, or in a day,—in some such exceedingly brief space of time,—the faith that is needful is both formed and finished! What follows is the sanctification of the life. If the faith were thus quickly gained as a rounded and completed whole, it would be, if we may say so with reverence, a comparatively slight acquisition. Such conceptions of it belong properly to a period when the idea of development had not yet gained currency, and when the historical sense was not

awakened. At the present time every branch of secular knowledge presents a huge array of ascertained facts, and confronts us with a realm of wonder. We dare not represent the faith as meagre in comparison to a secular subject, or admit that its grandeur is eclipsed. In respect to it, also, we need to acknowledge that there is development, and even a very extensive growth, such as may be observed in every other field of interest—indeed, the largest growth we can know. But apart from any desire to exalt the faith, the sense for truth, which must be obeyed at all hazards, requires us so to regard this matter. God and righteousness may be firmly laid hold of before any other topic of religion can be truly apprehended. As a matter of fact, there can be progress from stage to stage, and for a multitude of minds any other course of procedure is impossible.

It is gratifying to find that with such an advance there is a benefit, and not an injury, to religion. The honest seeker is never asked to believe more than he is capable of believing; he may thus be persuaded when he would otherwise be repelled. And there are new acquisitions and joys of the purest kind in prospect in this present time, which will at intervals furnish the most precious help and encouragement in the higher life. The joy experienced on turning to God has already been referred to at some length (p. 88 ff.). But similar delights, and many of them, are in store as various heights of vision are successively scaled; and we can understand how faith is in truth a lasting well-spring of blessing. Think, *e.g.*, though this is to anticipate, of the time when one comes to have a real knowledge and appreciation of Jesus Christ. First, Christian goodness will be readily taken to heart; there is a *Christian way* which will be understood without difficulty; there are Christian people whose piety and worth are undoubted, and through whom

we may know, at least in some degree, what Christ was like. Christ's life, in one aspect after another, is found to have points of resemblance to what is observed in His followers in later times and even now, so that it can be in a manner understood, while Christ's is at the same time recognised as rising to the height of heaven, so that it calls for worship—for intelligent and profitable worship. Hence in the apprehension of Christ there is another happy experience, resembling that which was known when the soul first responded in faith to the invitation of God. But point after point of the numerous Christian beliefs is set in clear light for such person in course of time; and as each vital point is illuminated, and seen in its everlasting truth and spiritual and practical worth, there is a peculiar and memorable feeling of exhilaration and holy joy. The unequalled gifts of faith, while abundantly satisfying on each occasion of bestowal, are drawn out in that character through the term of the life. Above all, the significance and saving virtue of our Lord's death come to be grasped and applied; there is at one stage a personal apprehension of the efficacy of Christ's Cross, of that full gift of God for man's salvation which Christians in all ages have rested on. When one for the first time realises that Christ's sacrifice has in very deed a meaning, use, and purpose, and that the very highest purpose, for him and for others, he experiences the exalted satisfaction which earthly images fail to depict, and which is described as blessedness, as the peace of God. Or, again, there is the question of the authority of Scripture. A blind submission is deadening. We want a real authority, entitled to be supreme, but one that is freely and intelligently acknowledged. Or, once more, we crave for a firm and well-grounded faith in immortality; and so on. In the case of all such topics there is a perceptible enlargement of the treasure of spiritual truth, as the matter in question is brought

home to one with the desired effect, when the particular content is borne in on the mind as a felt reality; and there is in each instance, as the special point or article of faith is grasped, a recurrence of that pure and exquisite satisfaction which has oftener than once been alluded to. And all Scripture, all nature, all history, has a spiritual meaning and value, and very much can be seized by every believer from each of these sources and utilised for his help and comfort and work in the world; and, of course, there is immeasurably more afforded than any man can exhaust. The faith proves to be rich in substance beyond our comprehension; it is not put in the shade by any science; it includes an ocean of truth; its field is the spiritual and material world. And so the joy of faith is not merely a sweet memory, receding further and further into the past. From time to time throughout the life, at intervals of varying length, there is with each added gain a restoration of the joy in its pristine freshness, so that the whole career on earth can be, so to say, triumphant. The religion is not changed; the religion, the inner life, is continuous and unbroken; one holds out hands of faith to God, and to the same God, every day he exists. But there is, as it were, a frequent return of spring to the life. That is not a state of things to regret, but rather to be thankful for. Times without number in experience the gospel blessings are made fresh and new.

But though these blessings are obtained in such plentiful measure, it is not implied that there comes a time on earth when there is no remaining sense of need. He would be in an evil case who was self-satisfied, or contented with any past attainments. One of the features of our lot is that with all the riches conferred there is a lasting sense of want, stirring up to lifelong approaches, with true and keen desire, to the God of heaven. "We have enough; yet not too much to long for more." It is the flight to

God with the sincere feeling of need, Himself rather than His gifts, that preserves true satisfaction. We should think it no evil that certain blessings are withheld, or that certain matters are left dark to our soul, if the effect is to make us return with earnestness to the Divine fountain of mercy and truth; for that is to obtain the chief and lasting good.

This required to be said, because otherwise it might seem that the faith is compromised by having to remain for a length of time curtailed, fragmentary, a torso. There is no external constraint in the case; but the believer, craving for reality in what he holds, himself draws a clear distinction between what is already true and tenable for him, and those matters which cannot yet, with the best will on his part, be viewed in that light. On these last heads he suspends his judgment, but feels no grievance in having to do so, being amply sustained by what he does possess, and being fortified and cheered by a great hope. There is humility in such an attitude; the things of God are honoured and magnified, while the self is held in check and found to be in need of protracted discipline.

## II

As a leading illustration of the assertion that little of what is ordinarily understood in a Christian land like this as going to make up the substance of religious faith is grasped in any sense or form at the initial stage of spiritual life by the class of minds we are here concerned with, we may take the subject of the significance of Jesus Christ to the thought of any such person. As yet there is no conviction or consciousness of any real relation whatever to Him (cf. p. 101). Much as one has heard and read about the perfect Redemption accomplished by Christ, about the reconciliation to God which is obtained by man only through

Christ's infinite merits, one will probably be altogether at a loss to discover the means of grasping such statements, of discerning any light in regard to the reality they express, or deriving benefit from them even of the slightest kind. Such traditional declarations may fall as on deaf ears; they may impress in a true sense neither the understanding nor the heart. And any strained and prolonged attempts to master their import or to gain a real appreciation of them are found to be but wasted effort. Not to speak of Christ's work of Atonement, it will probably be felt that there is a kind of vagueness and dimness surrounding His whole personality; in the view of those referred to, He retires into the remote past so as to be almost lost in its obscurity, and in a manner to approximate to the figures of mythology.<sup>1</sup> There is not the same vivid presentation of Him as a historical character to one's mind as there is, say, of Julius Cæsar. Enough, it is true, has been heard of Christ's doings and principles, and much of that matter may be even retained in the memory; but a strict regard for truth would lead one to say that in respect to it all only the hearing of the ear has been exercised; there has not been the glad, resonant response of the heart. And how to alter one's conviction for the better in this regard, how to make it positive, rich, and fruitful, still remains the difficulty. God and a good and noble life are sought with all sincerity, with an intense realisation of the necessity and desirability of possessing them, and soon with an experience of much blessing as the effect of seeking them; but there is no felt conviction as to any function which Christ performs, no sign of any intervention of His personality within the horizon of one's spiritual vision. The position is not justified to oneself; but the fact is indisputable, and the fact, moreover, is not to be altered by any sort of coercive measures.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *Hulcean Lectures*, quoted at p. 5.

One may trust in God, then, on the ground of the evidences that are to be discerned at this present time in and around oneself, and may pursue righteousness, and yet find that he can think very little of Jesus Christ to good purpose. On coming to the point, what he holds as to Christ, as to Him of whom we read in the Gospels, he finds that he is taken away in thought to another and a far distant land, and to a remote period nearly nineteen hundred years ago. Many questions of history are raised, and it is very difficult to get thoroughly trustworthy answers. The people and customs and work then and there were very different from what we are acquainted with here and now. The two aspects of life present the most striking contrast. Here there are many questions of trade, of the turns and prospects of trade, to engage attention, and such questions did not emerge in the same form among the ancient Jews. Here there are the newspaper with daily reports from the uttermost parts of the earth, the railway, ingenious inventions in endless variety, and prospects of ceaseless advances in worldly knowledge, and of indefinite material progress; and again, the Jews had nothing of the kind. What a different world it was from ours that Jesus moved in! The energetic man, desiring to succeed in this new world of ours, is immersed from day to day in occupations and thoughts which would have been totally strange to the contemporaries of Christ, and to which no allusion is made in the Old or the New Testament. He gets the information he is in search of from works or papers of the day. And what the sacred records do supply—declarations about ceremonial laws and sacrifices, about Scribes and Pharisees, about the Temple and Synagogues, and so forth—cannot be connected readily or at all with the pressing concerns of modern experience. Even the moral and spiritual teaching of the holy men of Scripture, the teaching of Christ Himself, because of its historical setting, because

of the frequency of allusions which now seem barely intelligible, appears to fall strangely on the ear, and not to be inwardly appropriated.

But the chief difficulty of all is that one fails to form a definite conception or picture of the nature of Christ. The best image that one can frame is indistinct, blurred, devoid of the qualities that could call forth genuine enthusiasm or admiration. The features of the personality of Jesus, and the powers He possessed, seem partly of heaven, partly of earth. On the one hand, He stands as an example for us and all men, and, on the other, He appears to be endowed with capacities which preclude all comparison with us, which set Him on a higher plane and confer on Him peculiar advantages. In the absence of a clear, telling, and glorious picture that can be envisaged, we are often presented simply with names or titles expressive of divinity, and are given to understand that, as Scripture assigns these titles to Jesus, that is enough; we have to acknowledge Him as God, and worship Him accordingly. We do not "behold His glory," in a commanding and winning Personality that far outshines every other that has captivated us, but only hear the list of names or titles instead.

An instance has been quoted<sup>1</sup> as a specimen of a class of manuals of religious instruction that have been popular down even to recent times. In reference to the second Article in the Lutheran Catechism, there is in the publication in question the following division of topics:—

1. The Person of the Redeemer. A. The Names of the Redeemer. B. The two Natures of the Redeemer.
2. The two States of the Redeemer. 3. The Work of the Redeemer. Appendix: On the three Offices of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> By Scholz in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie u. Kirche*, 1893, p. 358; the work referred to by him being an *Explanation of the Short Catechism*, etc., by Dr. Johannes C——. Twenty-ninth edition (!). Leipzig, 1886.

"Here," it is said by Scholz, "after the manner of the old writers on Dogmatics, everything is carefully put in the background that could lead to the discernment of an image of Christ, or even give any assistance for such a purpose. The individual features of the picture appear undefined, fugitive, effaced, distorted, taken out of their proper connection. The picture is buried behind its monumental frame, and the Person of the Lord acts in an impersonal manner as the sum of its categories." He shows, further, how such writers venture to rest the Divinity of Christ on the fact that there are assigned to Him in Scripture (*a*) Divine Names, (*b*) Divine Attributes, (*c*) Divine Works, and among the Divine Attributes to place in the forefront, as Attributes of the historical Christ which possess demonstrative significance, those of Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence. Then, in the same connection, they attempt to prove His earthly Humiliation by the circumstance that He divested Himself of His Divine rank, and set aside, or put in abeyance, those very Attributes which had just been ascribed to Him.

There can be no doubt that seemingly sound but thoroughly unedifying presentations of the Gospel Christ, more or less resembling the example now given, have been common in all the Christian lands, and that there is much truth in such criticism as the writer who has been quoted applies to them. Of course it must be expected that Christ, as bringing God to man, will take us in thought to a region that is inscrutable. But it does not follow that everything about Him is a maze and a tangle; else where were the Revelation? What is a revelation that reveals nothing, makes nothing plain? And how can we regard a Personality as totally obscure, and at the same time worship and adore it in all sincerity? The mystery and darkness are properly reached in the last resort, as they are reached, indeed, in the case of every object, spiritual or

material, that can be investigated. But before we come to touch these heights and depths, we must be conversant with a vast field of manifested truth. There is much goodness, love, and truth in the strictest sense *revealed* in Jesus, and we do well in so far to call for plainness in the presentation. The marvel will not be annulled if the spiritual and moral glory is in great measure actually beheld: it will rather be much increased; just as the successful investigation of nature has confronted men with a larger world that is unexplored, or as recent Astronomy, in particular, while disclosing very much palpable and positive truth, has at the same time awakened new conceptions of the astounding grandeur of the universe of worlds.

What wonder if in such circumstances, with such obscurity and seeming contradiction characterising the Person of Christ, as the result of a widespread theological tradition, one cannot forthwith advance with confident steps from faith in God to the apprehension of what pertains to Christ? In an age when positive truth is demanded in every department of human interest, and much success has been gained by brushing aside all cobwebs of the mind and attending to plain and indubitable fact, it is indispensable that one should feel one's way with the utmost care in the highest concerns of all. Time, trial, and inquiry are needed. But, as will readily be believed, the most fruitful knowledge of spiritual things may be expected in process of time when one puts away mere traditional assertions regarding them and allows one's thought to become fluid in the light of God. The conventional utterance is not a perfect reflection of the fine, impalpable spiritual substance, but is more or less rigid and contracted, to say the least, and tends to cause a petrification and sterility of thought. But the resolution to seek felt reality in these matters leads to the opening up of a well-spring of truth about the world of

spirit and the nature of the spiritual Christ, a fountain which is perennial and copious in its flow.

Rather than force oneself to make admissions about Christ which are not heartfelt, it is, then, beyond comparison preferable in the meantime to wait till one's steps are guided safely into the truth. It is for the time *most Christian* to desist from the useless effort to apprehend the personality of Christ in the way indicated, and to resolve instead to think of the highest things of the spirit that are sincerely appreciated, to follow hard after God and pure righteousness. This procedure, though one is not yet aware of the fact, will by and by be understood as being in reality the pursuit of the *Christian* path. For the faith actually held is already substantially Christian, not Jewish or heathen, not bound up with national exclusiveness or ceremonialism on the one hand, or with unethical worldliness on the other; and the righteousness which is chosen is part of that which the Christian world has inherited from Christ. There is an unconscious Christianity. And it is not dishonouring to Christ if He is viewed as a Being who is exalted above one's present power of conception, but of whom one aspires and confidently hopes to learn; it would be dishonouring to say to Him, "Lord, Lord," and not to do the things that He has said, or not to love supremely the goodness and truth that He incarnated and made current among men.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ADVANCE IN FAITH

#### I

As we proceed to consider the development of religious faith, we do well to bear in mind the truth of such a statement as that made by Ritschl: "Every logical judgment is incisive . . . a religious judgment on our experiences of life is light of touch, tender in feeling, pliant. There is no gift for scientific theology, no capacity for ecclesiastical office, which could make any difference here, or ensure such an infallibility as belongs—granting right premisses—to mathematical or logical conclusions."<sup>1</sup> There is no advance by a rigorous process, uniform for all the individuals concerned, or such that a given step is taken by all after a like interval of time. There is indefinite variety, depending on age, sex, temperament, calling in life, intellectual endowment, education, etc. The several aspects of the truth will be differently appreciated by different minds; and, again, some are quick, others are slow in apprehending the same topics. And yet there is an orderly development of faith in the case of all who are alluded to: it was expressly stated at the commencement of this essay that those persons only are here contemplated who are specially influenced by the characteristic movements of the present time, and who are in so far in a large measure similarly

<sup>1</sup> *Justification and Reconciliation*. Translation by Mackintosh and Macaulay. T. & T. Clark. P. 627.

circumstanced in respect to their mental habits and prospects. A dogmatic exposition of the subject would have a different aim (p. 39). In particular, they all crave for positive reality, and they are all accustomed to a *progressive* reception of it, in religion as in everything else. It is only reasonable, from the nature of the subject, and on the face of it, that there should be a certain order in which its parts present themselves to the understanding and spirit; that some should be elementary, others more profound and remote, requiring therefore to be deferred. Thus it is an article of the Christian faith that the Risen and Exalted Christ is still active among men on earth, and that the faithful are members of His body. But one who has just begun to submit to religious influences is almost certain to be bewildered by statements of the kind. To press them is to do violence to the understanding and to wound the spirit. Or, again, before the significance of Christ's death can be profitably apprehended, His nature, His life, needs to be understood. We must know who it was in this case that died; for many people were crucified. We must first enter into the meaning of the life, and learn of Christ as He preached the Kingdom of God and went about doing good. So, again, it is now a commonplace saying that we do not believe in Christ because of the miracles recorded, but rather believe in miracles for Christ's sake. First realise the distinctive peculiarity of the Person, and then it will be natural to find that He wrought miracles. Simplest of all it will be to mark and to approve of the way of thinking and living that is properly described as Christian. There is Christian goodness now to be observed among men. Almost all understand it. Yet it is like what was in Christ Himself—shows something of Him. It is at once simple and momentous in its import. This, then, may well be put forward as an object to be grasped and utilised in the earlier period, instead of the more

recondite heads which seem for the time to be neither plain nor profitable.<sup>1</sup>

But individual liberty and responsibility in the task of advancing in faith, as in the religious life generally, have to be fully respected. While the subject presents itself as ruled by an inherent logic, while there is objective reason, a law or truth pervading it, given to us and set over us, the individual believer has the privilege of interpreting and administering the truth in relation to his own experience. As the law of the land is rigorous and universal in its scope, but the judge, having expert skill and a disciplined sense of equity, adapts it to the particular case in order to give substantial justice; so the Protestant, having the duty and privilege of exercising his private judgment in religion, deals with the law of the higher spiritual life after the manner of the judge in the secular sphere. He has a responsibility as towards the law; he cannot modify it as he pleases, else it might as well be non-existent; but, on the other hand, as the judge is not a clerk acting mechanically or by rote, so the man of faith is not a slave to his rule. He loves the right which it embodies; even while

<sup>1</sup> As the question has not previously been directly raised here, it may be asked at this point whether it is simpler at the outset and more natural to fix the mind and heart on Christ as One who is clothed with our human nature, rather than on the spiritual and ineffable God; or whether we can believe in Christ without believing in God. Now, if our thought is irreligious or atheistic when the history of Christ is approached, what is to make it theistic in the issue? As a matter of fact, many who examine the New Testament with that frame of mind explain it all by a sheer naturalism, and, having no faith in God at the beginning, they have none in the end. Christ came in the fulness of time, after men were fitted by the knowledge of God, obtained through the revelation in nature and history, to appreciate His message. And our Lord directs men to God their Father, tells them to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, before presenting His own personality to them as an object of worship. St. Paul assumes a knowledge of God both in Jews and Gentiles. Here we do not forget that in the case of many, the preaching of Christ's Cross has been the occasion of awakening faith to life.

interpreting and applying it with care and circumspection to his concrete position, and taking what time may be necessary for himself personally with regard to each article, he does but desire and strive to give full effect to the reason of the rule. There is a rational development of religious faith, an order of growth which is determined by the subject-matter and the relation of our faculties to it. Yet there is no illegitimate narrowing either of the entrance or of the path of faith ; no violence is done to the rights and liberties of the individual. The truth here makes men free.

## II

The return to God, and the choice of righteousness by lively faith, were the human means, as has been said, of procuring without delay a variety of the best blessings, such as a sense of freedom, a sense of power, and a gift of new knowledge and of pure feeling,—a boon which seems all that could be desired, perfect, indeed, in its way. One knows not yet how it can be, but the fact is that there is freedom to approach God without fear, and without being oppressed and dismayed by the sense of sin. God Himself has in one's firm belief interposed in the case, and laid His hand, so to say, on one ; and that is enough to restore peace for the present. There is freedom to project one's spirit over the earth, and to seek there and from Scripture and other books the aids and directions which are adapted to the existing spiritual circumstances. There is power to discern and choose between the portions of good that are offered ; there is power to concentrate the mind with delight and for a length of time on spiritual concerns, whereas there had previously been only a sense of aversion to these things, of helplessness and of slavery under a crushing law.

Life implies movement, growth ; and so it is here. The bright spring-time of faith, when all is as if bathed in

sunlight, is not lasting in the experience of any person. The days of struggle, weariness, and comparative gloom soon recur. Not that faith has vanished, or that its benefits prove to be hollow; the faith is fixed, and the choice is made, and there is profound peace and lasting confidence as the effect. The course of life is established, not wavering: the feet are planted as on a rock. Yet there comes to be a sense of remaining want; the experience of exquisite and unmixed joy passes away; many questions are raised. There is a descent from the heights to the rude common world. There is an advance through conflict within and without, and as the result of faithfulness and patient waiting.

God and righteousness have been chosen, but it is found, after the brief blossoming time of faith, that neither of them is apprehended so far as is required. God has been made known to the soul through certain revelations, through ideals of the mind, through the marvel and the goodness of many of His works in nature, through parts of Scripture and many productions of God-fearing men, through the love and integrity of some of the people one has come in contact with, in particular, the persons who are nearest and best known, such as earthly parents. It is found, indeed, that the Being who is the ground and source of all this goodness in the world is greatly to be praised, that the faith is fixed on a worthy object. Yet the revelations in question are after all but limited, and therefore do not give lasting satisfaction. What God is in Himself, a spirit without a body, Infinite and from Eternity, the Maker and Preserver of the whole heaven and earth, and the sovereign guide of history,—the knowledge of that is too high for us, is baffling; and time and experience, instead of bringing the truth more within our range, only serve to show the depth of our ignorance. We dare not draw on our own consciousness and reflection in order to supple-

ment those revelations ; that would be to give the rein to all manner of subjective fancies. God is yet found to be a God that hides Himself. There is a need and a craving for more, for a fuller Revelation.<sup>1</sup> Much has been given, and so faith can survive and continue to yield benefit, but it is recognised that much is still wanting ; indeed, the sense of need is often predominant, keen and urgent, and so it is felt that one must press on and hope for more, otherwise the whole blessing that has been gained seems doomed to disappear.

On the other hand, the other object which is sought by the faithful person, namely, righteousness, is more and more understood by him, and here the advance is more manifestly continuous. For this righteousness is embodied in persons of whom he can learn, in the best of his contemporaries and those of whom history reports. Such men are to be found in great variety ; the kinds and degrees of excellence attained by them appear to be endless. Thus one sees merit that far exceeds his own, and this perception may be indefinitely extended. Always as such worth is understood, it is honoured and chosen by the heart of the faithful beholder. He casts in his lot with it, aspires to it, and judges himself and his sin in the light of it. Thus, while worshipping God and choosing in sincerity the best that is known on earth, one can with good conscience continue

<sup>1</sup> Harnack, *Christianity and History* (A. & C. Black), p. 41 ff., says : " Religion is a relation of the soul to God, and nothing more. That a man should find God and possess Him as his God,—should live in the fear of Him, trust Him, and lead a holy and blessed life in the strength of this feeling,—that is the substance and the aim of religion." As to the means of acquiring this religion, he says : " As the conduct of human life is manifold and various, so too is the voice of God. But we know that there are few among us who hear and understand the voice of God, in the secret sphere of their inner personal life, without human help and intervention." Yet no such means is sufficient for all our requirements ; he speaks (p. 47) of the times that are known, after all such aids are requisitioned, when God and everything that is sacred threatens to disappear in darkness.

to trust in the love of God. For what more could be done in the circumstances with the view of preserving that trust ? What else could be done with understanding or meaning, and without hurtful forcing ?

No doubt problems arise in connection with this matter of righteousness, and there is an earnest endeavour to press forward towards a solution of them. The soul may have mounted as if to the height of heaven, yet the man has not ceased to be a creature of earth. The time comes when the world again attracts him, and again he is defiled. Can we trust that a perfect Being will continue to accord His favour to one who sees and approves of the right, but yet comes short of the actual attainment and preservation of it ; who may repent, but has hardly done so when he finds himself at fault as before ; who sins and repents often, even every day ? Can this trust be maintained on good grounds, when we think of the sharp and swift consequences in many cases of the violation of natural law, or of the judgments at earthly tribunals, where a single offence often counts for very much ? No doubt we can fall back on the case of an earthly parent or friend, who is ready to forgive when signs of penitence and amendment are forthcoming, and who will even bear long with a weak transgressor. Such mercy and long-suffering is most estimable in them, and may be hoped for in God. It is the refuge of the faithful when humbled by their lapses and shortcomings. They can indeed trust ; but yet there may well be times of deep misgiving ; this is inevitable. For we have no example in any earthly relationship which resembles the case of a transgressor coming short every day as man does in the sight of God and his own conscience, and yet being continued in favour, befriended and aided. It seems that the whole situation would be too hopeless and the whole prospect too dark to warrant any trust, were it not the fact, however strange it appears, that there can be genuine repentance renewed

on the occurrence of every lapse, that sin is actually and sincerely hated as often as it is committed, hated even at the moment when it is chosen, and that in all the surging conflict the best continues to be honoured and loved, the inmost heart recognising in it alone its accepted portion. There is enough known to make it possible to trust and to persevere in the struggle, and to do so however much righteousness has come to be discerned. The heart is all for that righteousness, magnifies it and delights in it the loftier it is seen to be. And experience has often shown that the race for the actual attainment of it, and that the work of smiting down the opposing evil, may be carried on to good purpose (p. 96 f.). Then why despair? Why abandon the great hope that God has given? There is no alternative to repenting, trusting, and continuing the battle. Without objectionable forcing, there can be and there ought to be enduring faith, and great strength is acquired by means of it; but obviously there is much need to reach forward to surer ground and clearer light than is yet known. There will be frequent occasions when this necessity appears most urgent, the occasions, namely, when the fact of one's weakness, carnality, culpable ignorance, and slowness to improve is strongly borne in on one's mind.

It might appear that there is something unhealthy about such introspection, or in being absorbed in this manner with one's personal condition. Yet there is a time for this task as for others. There may be an error of excess, there may be morbid thought in connection with the matter; but there may also be an error of defect. There is no justification for neglect in this regard. As religion, however it may be described, implies the communion of the finite creature with the Infinite or Perfect God, we are constrained to ask whether we are fit to hold converse with Him. Our condition cannot possibly be a

matter of absolute indifference—except in the view of those whose ideals are low, whose God is like the God of the heathen, or, rather, of the lower types of heathen. Then—who is healthy, in the sense of being sinless? The rule is that, as the lofty standard which has been indicated above is discovered, one is *ipso facto* convinced of sin. And can one grow naturally out of sin without thought or effort, but simply by a process of passive drifting, or by getting to be engrossed with the world? It is healthy to face the evil strongly and bravely; it is weak and unhealthy to shrink from it. It is healthy to repent of sin, to hate it and resist it, and to proceed in the strength of faith to the fulfilment of worldly duty; to continue in such work all the day, with a soul that is made restful and steady; to shed an influence for good in this way on those about one, for they are certain to be in need, and their lot, without doubt, requires to be brightened; and to endeavour to think with pleasure of the things that are most glorious and honourable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, in the *Hibbert Journal* for April 1904, p. 466, says: "As a matter of fact, the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment; his mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing." And in the October number, p. 7, he explains as follows: "The statement seems to me true 'as a matter of fact,' provided by 'higher men' are understood leaders in the world's activity, whether they are working in the public eye, or in the study, or in the office, or anywhere save in the cloister. Perhaps when so put it will be granted, merely as a matter of fact, if saints are excluded, and if no moral judgment in favour of the thesis is claimed or supposed to be involved in the statement. But it will be contended that more than a matter of fact was implied in my article, that there was an element of judgment also, and that it was one of approbation; that the epithet 'higher' signified that a man who was up and doing, instead of introspecting and mourning over his sins, was in the path of progress, and was to be praised rather than blamed. Undoubtedly I did mean that too. . . . (Cf. Matt. xxiv. 46, xii. 43.)

"It may surely, without unorthodoxy, be held that there are two ways of overcoming sin and sinful tendencies—one, the direct way, of concentrating attention on them with brooding and lamentation; the other, the indirect and, as I think, the safer and more efficacious, and

## III

If there is a duty to press forward to surer ground, there is also encouragement, a stimulating inducement, to altogether more profitable way, of putting in so many hours' work per day, and of excluding weeds from the garden by energetic cultivation of healthy plants."

The assertion as to the "matter of fact" in the above quotation, viewed in the light of the explanation given, is doubtless unquestionable. A far-reaching change of feeling and practice—certainly in the expression of feeling—has recently occurred. The men of affairs in particular, who carry on the great work of the world, do not grieve and mourn over their sins in the way that was once, and not very long ago, held to be indispensable. What of the other matter, of approbation? The answer would depend on whether or not the fact of sin is admitted by those who lead the strenuous life, and on whether the sin is purposely combated or not. In the case supposed in the article, the fact of sin is admitted, and the worldly activity is designed—at least this is one of its aims—to "overcome sin and sinful tendencies." But, again, those who are immersed in worldly occupations are apt to be completely absorbed by them, and to put the higher spiritual interests entirely on one side. At the present time, it is understood that the majority of the busy workers on the Continent of Europe make no secret of this as their attitude towards religion. In so far as this is the position of matters, we have to say, "The world is too much with us," etc. The two classes of workers—the religious class contemplated in the article, and the non-religious class—stand widely apart from each other, though it is not for man to judge regarding individuals.

In any case—however much worldliness abounds—few even of the most spiritually-minded people would go so far as to recommend any practical measure for reducing the amount of earthly activity: is there to be a retrograde movement towards industrial incompetence and stagnation, in order that the subjects of sin and salvation may have justice done to them? We feel at once, however strongly we are convinced that spiritual interests are of supreme value, that this would be a wrong and impossible course. The world can, and ought to be, a school of the highest morality; and the more activity there is, the greater the scope for right action and habit. There is a hurtful tendency in religion which receives a wholesome lesson and correction from this consideration, the tendency, namely, to lament sin without seriously attempting to get the better of it by becoming righteous—by positive and fruitful well-doing.

But when the place and value of religion are acknowledged, and when effect is given by worldly activity to its paramount claims, the moral and spiritual *ideal* begins to be discerned. And the more one works in the world with intent to realise the ideal, the further it recedes

do so. For other people, as has been stated (p. 126), are to be seen or known who have risen far towards the condition which man ought to exhibit, and the sight of them is invigorating. Their mind is clear and radiant ; their faith, their principles, and character are mature and settled ; their step is firm and sure. They exert a powerful influence for good on the downcast spirit. Observation of them, or brief contact with them, restores to inward health and hope. They embody the nature we fondly desire ; they show it to

from him. Just as the expert in science has not *learned all science*, but, as the result of his exceptional activity and power, knows better than others do that the sum even of ascertained truth is practically limitless, so it is notorious that those who have been most energetic and successful in pursuing the moral and spiritual ideal have been most clearly aware of its distance from them. Thus it is that the strenuous life, when there is also the spirit of vital religion, is calculated to acquaint one with an infinite good, and also with one's own remoteness from it ; in other words, the sense of sin is increasingly deepened. There will be no cessation, perhaps no diminution, of activity on this account ; in some respects there might conceivably be an increase. And there will be no weak gush of feeling, either in deplored the sin or in loving the good which brings rest and relief. But the conviction of sin is there, and, moreover, it is not removed, tends rather, as the ideal is opened up, to be intensified, by the discharge of worldly work. The "higher" the active man is as a man, and not as an efficient worker in the world merely, the more he comes to know this.

Doubtless the two active classes referred to, the religious and the non-religious, appear to meet or merge into each other. Some who would admit that religion is not a power in their life are among those whom we heartily like. They have a fine *naturel*, are honourable, and in many respects exemplary, are often very engaging. And it is not for us to say where the parting of the ways begins in the soul. The course is therefore to try to judge no man, to exercise boundless hope and charity, and to recognise how much it is possible to accomplish by a wise presentation of Christianity among multitudes who are in the thick of the world's battle, but, as all the apparent evidences indicate, are susceptible of the highest spiritual influence. We can say, generally, that without aspiration to the infinite, and the religious conflict which is implied, the tendency on the part of the man of affairs, or of anyone else, is to shallowness and emptiness of nature ; and this is ultimately the result. In such a case, be the man never so active, it is apparent ere long to those who know much of him, that he is losing his soul, his *life*. They come to see, with regret, what "might have been."

be attainable by beings of flesh and blood, living in the same times and amid the same surroundings as ourselves. By them the seeker for the highest good is convinced that he is on the right way; he is insensibly restored to hopefulness, and even enthusiasm. The truest, bravest, and most unselfish lives discovered in modern days call forth the sincere and delighted approbation of the person who has begun to keep close to God and to choose His will. He singles them out without difficulty from the general mass, accords them all honour for the worth which is exhibited, sees them to be guiding-stars for his own thought and practice. They stand high, so as to attract with power; they are not so eminent as to discourage by seeming to be of another order of being than oneself. They are what "every man in arms should wish to be." There is a common stamp impressed upon them, notwithstanding their individual characteristics. They have steadfast faith in God and His goodness, a faculty of self-control, a certain sense of superiority to the judgments that may be passed on them in the world, a passion for righteousness, a sincere love for mankind, and as the leading aim in life the purpose and endeavour to promote righteousness and charity on earth. And as a result, they give proof of a restfulness and a sunny serenity of soul in themselves, a clearness of conviction even in perplexing circumstances, weight of character, a fulness of the inner nature that is unfathomable, a mystery of the formed personality that exerts a ceaseless charm on others. Now, such persons are those who have entered on the *Christian* course, and made considerable progress on it. As we honour them and derive benefit from them, it is the Christian character that looms out before us and impresses us, whether we describe it by this name or not. In religion it is the thing, the reality, rather than the name, that is of importance. There is a way of thinking and living which now calls forth the warm

approbation of the man of faith, and it is in truth the Christian way. He has a keen appreciation of Christian worth and Christian acts. If there is any doubt on this matter, if it seems that these concerns of Christianity are of an artificial kind and lie apart from the thought of the person who simply cleaves to God and to sterling and manifest righteousness, one should reflect as to the treatment which he desires others to extend to himself. It is Christian treatment, that and nothing else. The reality is well and simply understood, and thoroughly appreciated. The men who are most practised and consistent in the pursuit of this course of living are the healers of their needy brethren, heroes whose figure, language, bearing, and example cheer on those who are behind them in the life-struggle, and who had begun to flag or waver.

Hence we see what is the great call and function of *the Church*. In the Christian community there are men of pronounced faith and virtue who are efficient helpers of the rising race of believers. In a Christian country, the institutions, literature, and many of the customs bear a distinctively Christian stamp. They imply faith in God, they enforce justice, they inculcate or give practical proof of charity. Above all, the most exemplary class of people have attained a life that radiates a powerful influence around them, and strongly stimulates others to acquire a like fulness of life for themselves. These last, having already made choice of pure righteousness, feel bound to emulate the loftiest types they can discover; but they also find it to be a privilege and blessing to contemplate them. Hope is revived by the sight in the novices who have become disappointed with themselves. Still honouring and rejoicing in the best they know, as seen in these men, but lamenting their own lapses or defects, they find it possible to maintain their trust in God.

At length, by these means which are afforded in the

Church, one is enabled to gain a true, personal knowledge of Christ. For it is discovered that those outstanding individuals who have been taken as guides learned of Christ themselves, and that the generations of the faithful are to be traced back to Christ as the Creator of their faith and the Exemplar of their practice. The saintliest men after all do but suggest a perfect character which they themselves fail to attain. Experience makes it clear to every seeker for spiritual truth, that none of his fellow-men is in all respects a worthy child of God. Closer acquaintance invariably reveals defects and transgressions in them. It is natural to youth and in a measure becoming to take without suspicion human examples, the best that have been known or heard of, as patterns that should be implicitly followed; as if the character that rises high on one or two sides, or on some occasions, were uniformly lofty. But it is found with pain, as the result of fuller knowledge, that one such pattern after another fails to satisfy the great requirement. No man is fit to be adored. Even though the Spirit of God works mightily in a person, the power of the world and of sin asserts itself too at some point or other. If, then, we have associated certain men in thought with God and His holy law and His heart of love, we learn that we must also go on to distinguish between the Divine Spirit and each of the human embodiments of it. We perceive and exalt a nature and character which we have to disengage from each and all of the persons who were the means of suggesting it. We must look away from them to see it in its purity, without imperfection or disfigurement. We cannot be satisfied with regarding it as a mere fancy, light as air, beautiful perhaps, but unrealised and unrealisable; it is needed as a historical reality, to account for the approximations to completed goodness that are met with in Christendom. And the elements of it are all to be ob-

served in the nature of Jesus Christ as it is delineated in the Gospels. There is now a preparation and fitness for understanding that nature of Christ, at least for appreciating it in a great measure ; there is an intense craving for that perfect truth and goodness which is to be seen in Him alone, and it is observed that history implies Him. His spirit and character can now be largely understood even amid the unfamiliar circumstances alluded to in the New Testament, and through the language of the New Testament, which is frequently strange ; for the nature of Jesus we have already come to know in some degree, and sincerely to approve, in certain of those who stand close to us in time, place, and circumstances. The eyes of the mind have been enlightened by means of a living and growing faith, a faith which is itself sustained by the power of a present God. And, after all, in spite of the diversity of customs, the people in the East in Christ's time were human ; and Christ spoke in the gospel to their human needs, and can be understood yet by all who have such needs themselves and have been accustomed to go with them to God. Thus Christ, whose figure had once appeared altogether obscure, begins to be manifested, in some of His chief lineaments, through the known character of His most exemplary followers in *the Church*. And the historical reality of His life in the past, some nineteen hundred years ago, is ascertained with increasing confidence as one traces back the stream of Christian history to Him as its pure and necessary spring.

## IV

We may consider more fully the possibility of visualising the Person of Christ. The Galatians of St. Paul's day, living far from Palestine, in a province of Asia Minor, had, of course, never seen Jesus in the body : their geo-

graphical position determined that point. But St. Paul in his earlier preaching had so presented Christ to them, had so described His teaching, His works of righteousness and mercy, His holiness and love unto death, as well as His glorious Risen Life, that the hearers in Galatia had formed a distinct picture of what Jesus had been. There was an image of Him, as we would say, before their mind's eye. And it was a clear and telling portrait. Jesus Christ, it is said (Gal. iii. 1), was evidently, *i.e.* plainly, or, as the R.V. has it, openly, set before their eyes. His Personality was opened up to their mind's view. They had obtained a clear sense and firm conviction as to the manner of Being He was. His spiritual and moral features were engraved on their souls.

We are apt to think that little can be grasped by us and held as certain, unless we have the sure guarantee of the eyesight or some other sense. Yet such plain and definite knowledge of Christ may be obtained by us, though we never saw or heard Him, as had once been possessed by the Galatians. It is true, these Galatians had an advantage which no longer exists: they had a specially inspired apostle to depict the lineaments of Christ's personality in life and in death, so that it stood out, as no artist's brush could have made it do, a speaking likeness. Even so, however, it was only a case of mind communicating truth to other minds through the medium of language; the apostle himself could not restore the departed Jesus and present Him before the bodily eyes of men, though doubtless, by the power of his inspiration and character, he could produce effects which we cannot properly conceive. Still, we have other advantages that were unknown to the Galatians and all others of their time. We have the four Gospels, which had not yet been composed and in circulation at the date of Paul's ministry among the people in question. These Gospels permanently

set before us many aspects of Christ's activity and endurance. And, again, we can look back, as Paul's hearers could not do, on many hundreds of years during which the influence and fruits of Christ's appearance on earth have grown and spread in Christendom. We know a person in one very effectual way by his work, by what he has been the means of accomplishing. So these manifold fruits of Christianity during the ages supply us with the means of forming a correct image of the Founder of the religion; and such means were not available for those who heard the apostles, the fruits not having had time as yet to grow. From the record in the Gospels and the results that have been manifested during the Christian centuries and are observable still, we can have the Personality of Jesus Christ evidently, plainly, set before our soul's vision.

We have lately seen how clearly a character, in all its essential features, can be envisaged, and with what powerful effect for good, even without the aid of the senses. The highest in this realm of Britain for over half a century, the late Queen Victoria, came to be well understood by the mass of the subjects, though most of these had no direct evidence of the eyesight to assist them, and very few indeed had heard the living voice of the sovereign. But the multitude of the people could put together a variety of expressions of her spirit and will, indications of the personality which had been published; and these expressions all harmonised with each other, showing one type of character, the type which mankind felt to be the most estimable. Without that information which the senses convey regarding little details of appearance and habits of private life, without seeking to lift the veil from such matters, which really concerned no one outside, but simply by reflecting on the significance of many deeds which were done and utterances of the individuality which were made on public occasions or in circumstances of

private need, the body of the people could form a definite and true conception of what the guiding motives and springs of the life were. One single token by itself might have seemed slight, but in combination they were most significant; they went to form a picture which was plainly set forth before the inward eye. There was long time, more than sixty years, to allow the impressions which were produced to sink into the mind of the populace and to work their effect; and the signs that were given forth, together with the great length of time during which they could operate, yielded an unmistakable result. The nature marked by piety and integrity, and accustomed to evince deep and true feeling, was set forth evidently as if before men's eyes. And death was the means of confirming and intensifying the conviction which had been formed over the civilised world.

It seems that, if we bear in mind the difference between the earthly and the heavenly, such a case may be fitly applied to illustrate the higher subject of the attainment by those living here and now of a real view of the unseen, historical Personality of Christ. Religion is not now a matter of miracle, nor does God's grace act like magic. The methods employed in religion for the formation of belief are analogous to those with which we are familiar in common life; and this must be so if they are to be convincing. Besides, the loftiest characters which are employed to illustrate the things of religion are themselves avowedly shaped by their Christian faith, and are dependent on it. It is, strictly speaking, no alien formation that is utilised for purposes of comparison or explanation; the light of faith and moral worth as appearing in recent lives is derived ultimately from Christ, and to Him therefore belongs all the honour. He is understood in the light which He Himself has supplied.

We can understand, then, as we reflect on such a case

as that which has lately been brought prominently before our minds, how we may have a real effectual, profitable knowledge of Christ, an intelligent apprehension of Him by the vision of the soul, but a perception which is far from being a flitting fancy, which rather seizes truth with convincing force, and makes one yield to the majesty of actual goodness of the purest kind. We do not need the witness of the senses to be able to grasp the Revelation made in Him. There might even have been disappointment if we could have had such testimony; for those who had it were told that it was expedient that He should go away from them. Then they would depend on the Spirit, the unseen power that brings before one the deeper essential things of the heart and will, the things which give the true, distinctive imprint and inwardness of one's being. Having that power of God yet active in our midst, and having other means of grace, we can still have Christ evidently set before us. The other chief means have already been touched upon, as the Gospels. These furnish not merely slight indications of what Christ was, but very extensive descriptions; and the accounts are all of a piece, fitting into each other, presenting One who did works which no other man did, and who spake as never man spake. If a person is absent, is across the sea, *e.g.*, letters from him enable one to recall him vividly; the peculiar stamp of his being reappears as one peruses them; the man in his special characteristics rises up again, almost as if he were presented once more to sight; and he would continue to do so, as we return to those letters of his, even after he was dead. The Gospels, it has been said, are like a large collection of letters left by our Lord for the instruction, edification, and comfort of His friends. They, too, show what He was; through them His figure is restored; the underlying principles, the guiding motives and aims, the feelings that animated the heart,—these all-important characteristics can be largely understood

and appreciated, though never entirely comprehended. We observe Christ living in steady communion with God His Father, and conforming with full obedience and with the choice and devotion of the heart to God's eternal will; we mark how He sets before Himself as the engrossing purpose of His life the task of seeking the welfare of mankind by drawing them to the righteousness of God's Kingdom, by healing them, and forgiving and comforting the penitent, while courageously resisting wickedness and exposing hypocrisy. We find Him enduring any and every hardship which this calling involved, and going forward in pursuance of it, and in voluntary submission to God's will, even when feeling forsaken of God, to the most cruel death. There is one supreme type of Being, self-consistent, and far exalted above the rest of the sons of men, set forth with plainness in the Gospel records, exhibited to the mind's view, if the reports are read in the light implied by faith in the God that lives and works yet in the hearts of men. The essential things relating to Jesus, the spirit and character that have subduing power, are still to be distinctly realised; and the other points relating to His bodily appearance and so forth it is better that we do not know. A portrait, a photograph or painting, goes far, it may seem, to confirm our impression of what a person was. Thus the dignity and worth of the late Queen were brought home to the people as a whole through the portraits with which they were familiar. Help is undoubtedly supplied by such means; but it is not indispensable, as we gather from the numerous cases in history or in the life of to-day in which a man's essential quality is very effectually borne in upon us simply and solely by the record of things he has said or done. No portrait of Jesus is to be had, nor is one required.

A person is known by his works, the effects he has produced. "Ye shall know them by their fruits," said

Jesus; and the same test applied to Himself makes Him stand out pre-eminent and, as we shall see cause to say, Divine in history. What kind of men did Christ form in His Church? They are His product; their faith and new life were originated by Him, and show what His mind and power were; as the work of the craftsman tells of his skill, sets the man before the view of the beholder. Jesus carefully taught the apostles, shaped their lives, made them men of God, men who were in the world but above the world, consecrated for the service of God, the enlightenment of men unto salvation, and the recovery of them for the ends of everlasting righteousness. The apostles handed on the truth and the saving message to their successors, and these again to others; till the stream, though sometimes appearing for a length of time to be stagnant, has come down without a break to the present day. There have been Christian people, martyrs, reformers, and many others, and some of outstanding worth in our own day, all embodying the one type of religious and moral character, retaining their personal peculiarities, indeed, but representing in the chief matters one order of spirit and one cast of thought and way of life. Furthermore, Christian people, gathered together in communities and nations, set forth their convictions on the loftiest things in a great variety of acts, in prevailing customs, current writings, public institutions. People are influenced among us in the main concerns of their life by the power that emanated from Jesus Christ; they are baptized, taught, married, buried in the spirit of the Christian religion; they are guided to a great extent in what they say and do, and in what they avoid saying and doing, by Christian principle, by the sense of propriety and honour which they have derived from the standard set before them in the New Testament, and often held up to them with self-evidencing authority by the faithful in these later times. These people and practices have to be in-

cluded in the work of Christ, are the outcome of what He did; and by this fruit He is to be known; His image, goodness, and power are set forth as if before the eyes of the present generation.

Long time, as was said, does much to make the scattered intimations of a person's mind and ruling aims sink into the hearts of others, so as to be combined and to produce a single impression, which ripens into a firm conviction, into sure knowledge such as one possesses regarding an acquaintance of long standing. Now, there has been a period of nineteen hundred years for the many expressions of our Lord's mind and life, and the many fruits of His work, to be diffused, and to make their way into the most secret chambers of men's souls. The Kingdom of God, as He taught, is like leaven hid in meal, slowly pervading its substance, affecting the minutest part by its secret action, till the whole is leavened. There has been much time for that very real influence which proceeds from Christ to accomplish its leavening process. The effect of that long interval is to transform the fibres of men's inward being in a Christian sense, and to afford the means of knowing with firm persuasion what Christ was, and what is in accordance with His mind and will. There have been ample means and opportunity for those now living to have a true and trustworthy image of Christ set before them. It is impossible for them to measure all that has come to them from Him, through those various channels and during those many centuries. Very much help is available for the highest needs, for spiritual uses, if men will have recourse to it. There is difficulty, no doubt, in approaching such a task, but it is not insuperable, and it may easily be exaggerated. The great thing to be desired is that men would honestly put forth their powers to employ and put in practice the aids which are at hand, that they would take the necessary time and trouble. If the object is regarded as of real

worth, each one can have Christ set before his eyes, not merely in a manner that is fanciful, unreal, without value for any practical purpose, but rather as a light to guide and cheer the life, and a power that presses on the life, and shapes it without ceasing into that nature and image which God designed for it, so that it may be glad, strong, original and fruitful.

It will be apparent that it is a spirit and character that are here contemplated, an object for faith. If this is borne in mind, there will be no unhealthy mysticism or weak sentiment, no assumption of direct and close intimacy with the Person of the Lord, such as might be formed if there were sensuous or quasi-sensuous visions of His presence, or if actual conversations of a kind were carried on with Him. "People long for a confidential, a bridal, relation to Him. To many that seems the topmost height that can be reached by the Christian. They misunderstand such declarations of the Lord as that He will come and dwell with His people, and they misunderstand certain favourite hymns. No! As against such attempts to approach the Lord by the means of perception, He utters His warning word, 'Touch Me not.' Between the Risen Lord and us there is drawn the line of demarcation which is described by the saying, 'We walk here by faith, not by sight'; above this line there hangs a veil which we cannot penetrate either with our senses or with our feeling. For Him it does not imply any limitation, does not act as a wall of partition. From Him we have the promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' If He will, He can, doubtless, by the contact effected through His Spirit, supply times of refreshing for a person's soul. *But it must be left entirely to Himself to determine whether that is to happen.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Hoffmann, quoted by Ecke in *Die Theologische Schule Albrecht Ritschls*, 1897, p. 220.

If this limitation of our view has to be admitted, even after one has come to have faith in the Risen and Exalted Christ, it is *a fortiori* apparent that a purely spiritual conception is thought of, when one is as yet only endeavouring to apprehend the nature of Jesus from what has been recorded of Him in the past, and from His influence in history. Indeed, when a spiritual image of Christ has been realised, it need not be consciously before the mind in any form in every moment of devotion. Christian faith is often exhibited in the best manner by a simple, childlike trust in God as Father, by meekness and diligence, and the desire to fulfil His will. So, at a later stage, when we will be convinced that the Cross of Christ reveals in perfection the righteousness and love of God, and will very often have occasion to revert to the Revelation there completed, there will even then be many times of lively faith when we do not dwell on the Death of Christ. Some other special mercy, some particular ordering of events in Providence, is vividly realised instead, and calls forth heartfelt thanks and praise. The religion is many-sided; and faith will not restrict its view to any one aspect, even though it be the most glorious, or to any one event, even that which forms the culmination of the history. A spiritual image of Christ is necessary, and is attainable, and once gained it will very often be purposely reverted to as a standard for judgment, as the object of desire, and as the goal of aspiration. And we may be certain that unconsciously it colours and determines the whole life without interruption. However, it will often appear even yet, that "religion is a relation of the soul to God and nothing more. That a man should find God and possess Him as his God,—should live in the fear of Him, and lead a holy and blessed life in the strength of this feeling,—that is the substance and the aim of religion" (Harnack, quoted at p. 126). But as Christ is the way to the full, saving knowledge of the Father, it

is no derogation from the efficacy of His Revelation when, in the manner indicated,—by the filial worship and service of God,—the very end which Christ desired is fulfilled.

Keeping in view the limits and safeguards which have been alluded to, we may state some of the leading specific features of the image of Christ which may be witnessed. For there must be some definiteness in the image; it is not simply vague, flitting, elusive. It must be positively attractive and commanding. In this connection we recall a number of recent monographs, bearing such titles as "The Portrait of Christ," "The Mind of Christ," "The Image of Christ," "The Way of Christ," and the German works on the *Charakterbild*. In many respects, as a survey of the Life and Work of Christ, *Ecce Homo* remains unrivalled. An admirable summary and exposition of the principal elements is given by Scholz in the article already referred to.<sup>1</sup> A condensed paraphrase of the relevant portion of the latter treatise will here be given, forming the remaining part of this chapter.

The key to the Life of Jesus is there represented as being found in the idea of His Mission. The immediate sphere of the activity of Jesus was His own nation, and the means employed were public speech and the miraculous healing of the sick. He is concerned only with the things of God, the eternal salvation of men; it must not be regarded as a defect, but as a sign of greatness, when He puts all else aside. In His special vocation, work was His lot from morning till night; He had not time enough to take food.

The main characteristic of the life of Jesus is, then, that it was full of righteous *activity*. Yet it has been customary to put the fact of His activity in the background behind that of His suffering, as if the former were of little or no significance. Christians adhered to the letter of the Apos-

<sup>1</sup> *Das persönliche Verhältniss zu Christus*, p. 361 ff.

tolic tradition, which, when it had occasion to go behind the Resurrection, naturally dwelt most on the Death of Christ, as the occurrence that immediately preceded the Resurrection, and contrasted most strongly with it. And the tradition, summarising the truth, attributed to that Death the saving effects which were really due to the appearance of Christ on earth, and all that sprang from it. But those who thus cleaved to the letter of the tradition forgot the particular historical situation of the men of the Apostolic age, to whom much was self-evident or of subordinate significance, which we require to apprehend with real effort. In the Apostolic age the Resurrection was an ascertained fact, the belief in the speedy return of Christ a dominating conviction. But the characteristics of the earthly life formed matter that was familiar, and might, therefore, be disregarded. Hence the emphasis was placed not on the activity of Jesus, but on the Crucifixion and what resulted from it. But our circumstances and needs now are different. The same things—just mentioned—are not at once self-evident to us, or confidently expected; and again, at whatever cost of trouble, we require to familiarise ourselves with the mind and the earthly life of Jesus, with the matter which the first disciples regarded as preliminary knowledge that might be taken for granted. Besides, the Passion of the Lord can be understood only through His active life; only thus does the self-sacrifice of the Redeemer assume the aspect of freedom, give proof of character, and rise to the height of the Johannine conception (John x. 18). The stress must be laid therefore on the activity. Thus there is the further advantage that the figure of Christ takes on manly features, instead of the feminine trait which preponderates in the tradition. Ascetic literature treats mainly of what is affecting; sets forth the infinite goodness, gentleness, lowliness of Christ in His self-humiliation; describes Him as the Good Shepherd, and as the innocent

Lamb; and rests in the contemplation of His soul-satisfying wounds. All this speaks of feminine, not of masculine thought. And the more this matter is looked at apart from its connection with the world depicted in Scripture, and with the actual life of the Apostles, in which real greatness and intense earnestness are to be observed, or the more we try to make such conceptions act in independent fashion for the edification of the Christian flock, so much the more emotional and feeble the process is found to be. The complaint has been raised against Christianity by Paulsen, that it is deficient in the virtue of courage.<sup>1</sup> There might be some plausible ground for the charge when we recollect the tradition. But the defect would be a grievous one.<sup>2</sup> All admire the great men or patriots in history who strove, sword in hand, for freedom and right; and in the higher institutions of learning the old Roman spirit and the Hellenic ideal of manhood are still exalted; and courage is still demanded by us, at least in those who occupy a public position. Hence the image of Christ requires to exhibit manly features, if it is to produce a powerful effect; and it has been already said that only on this condition is a proper apprehension of His Passion to be gained.

Among those manly traits there is first His *Self-reliance*. No one could give Him advice or relieve Him of His burdens: all others are recipients. On critical occasions He stands in tragic isolation, but it is as if His head touched the heavens. Next, there is the unvarying *Clearness* of His thought. There is no hesitancy or doubt such as the Baptist evinced: though He grew in wisdom,

<sup>1</sup> Paulsen, *System of Ethics*, trans. (Kegan Paul & Co.), 1899, p. 69 ff., 613 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Paulsen elsewhere (*Ethics*, p. 497) observes that courage is originally *the virtue* (*virtus*), and adds, "Youth has no sincerer regard for any virtue than for stern and shrewd, and especially magnanimous courage."

He does not reflect, with laboured estimate of the *pros* and *cons*, as regards any step that is contemplated. Thirdly, His *Independence*. He stands as a rock, neither applause nor hate making Him diverge a hairbreadth from His path. He shudders, no doubt, in Gethsemane. And He makes great advances towards those who are inclining to God and righteousness. But when His cause would be compromised He is unyielding. Fourthly, there is the most steadfast *Endurance*. With the growing opposition His endurance grows. Here are virtues enough to prove to the full that in the life of Jesus the qualities of manly activity are inherent and conspicuous.

The inner motive power for this activity, the centre of organisation for the several virtues, we find in the *fulfilment of Duty*. Even for Him there was a "must" (John ix. 4); though duty was understood not as based on the Categorical Imperative, but in the form of obedience to God. What is external, legal, is cast off: the will of God becomes His food; it is a yoke which is easy and a burden which is light.

What is the standard by which in the case of Jesus the fulfilment of duty, or obedience to God, is regulated? Whence did He receive Divine guidance and the certainty that it was Divine? It is obvious that all standards of appeal and authorities of an earthly kind fail in this case: even the law and the prophets were restricted in their utterances. But the Spirit of God dwelt in Jesus, and was given to Him without measure, so that He knew the Father absolutely. This unlimited *knowledge of God* is the most outstanding element of His Personality; by it the other elements can be articulated in one whole, and that the greatest that can be conceived. It is now clear that in matters of religion He is the highest authority, that He has a claim to our trust, that one must cleave to Him in order to be certain of God as our Father in life and in

death. Thus one can say, I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord.

By this means the figure of Jesus can be apprehended to good purpose; there is a living picture supplied in response to the craving for an intuition and graphic presentation; there are personal impressions which are so articulated together that they can be retained in the memory. In place of a mere aesthetic relation of wonderment, and in place of a transient gush of feeling, we have the relation of moral reverence and religious trust. Then, with the constraining evidence which we have of His sinlessness, His credentials are complete: in the Sinless One the truth is incarnate, is commensurable with His Person. Jesus the Object of our Trust—this, in brief, is the result at which we arrive.

It might be supposed that all that is to be got from Christ is merely the benefit of a good example. But this is a conception of too limited range. The fact that Jesus held converse with publicans and sinners who could not possibly rise to the height of His example, that in these conversations He did not lay down injunctions with the tone of command, or with the severity of a judge, but took the men into His confidence, and sat with them at table; that He assisted the disciples and others to gain faith, instead of merely teaching them about faith; and, again, His going in search of the needy, His raising, restoring, and reforming them—“the winning and delivering,”<sup>1</sup> as Luther says in his explanation of the second Article,—all this speaks of a power which is above and beyond the influence of mere example. It may be assumed that one who enters into contact with Jesus Christ becomes a partaker even at this day of the same results by which those of old were made glad; that by this means one who is oppressed by want and sin is raised up, cheered,

<sup>1</sup> *Luther's Primary Works*, Wace and Buchheim, *in loc.*

and led as a penitent child to the Heavenly Father. We may say, finally, that Christian piety lays hold of all these benefits in the most direct fashion in the view of Christ Crucified.

In this manner, Professor Scholz concludes, we prepare the way for the deepest personal relation to Christ, namely, by concentrating attention on the picture presented in His historical life, and by furnishing ground for the conviction that Jesus is the object of our trust. But unfailing success, he admits, is not to be expected from any presentation of Christ. We can but show the channel: the waters of life must flow down from the mountains of God. In the last resort, man's well-being depends not on any one's desire or action, not on teaching or learning, but on the mercy of God.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HISTORICAL EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

#### I

HERE the question arises, In so representing Christ to our minds, are we on the ground of reality? Is this Christ, possessing the endowments which have been sketched, only a phantom of our thought, an ideal that was never actual, and is perhaps impossible; one, too, that may be modified by different people to suit their varying desires or conceptions? It may appear, and it is often said, that there are "doctrinal facts," the miraculous elements connected with our Lord's Birth, His active life, and His departure from the earth, which furnish the solid basis of Revelation, and which alone warrant our recognition of Christ as "the object of our trust," and are needed in particular that we may accept the truth as to His Divinity. The miraculous occurrences are often regarded as the "solid rock" on which Christian belief is properly made to rest, and without them we have only shifting sand, a mere imaginary support for a mystic interpretation.<sup>1</sup> For without them, according to that frequent supposition, Christ, though a great teacher, is, after all, only a common man, and Christianity becomes

<sup>1</sup> This is said, too, by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, who uses the well-known argument as in the text for his negative purpose, in a criticism he makes of views given forth by the Bishop of Ripon, the Dean of Ripon, and the authors of *Contentio Veritatis* (*Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1903, pp. 33-34).

a phase or illustration of natural religion. Moreover, the solidity which was understood to characterise the Christian faith now gives place to a vague mist; its substantial reality dissolves into an impalpable, subjective feeling.

But, on the other hand, we have to ask those believers who say, Admit the miraculous elements else you admit nothing that is of value, How is the belief in the miracles to be gained in these days by those who are for the first time seriously approaching the faith with a view to a personal appropriation of it? A blind acceptance of them is deadening or impossible. Belief must commend itself as reasonable. And we have the necessary preparation of mind when we have first gained a faith in the perfect goodness of Christ: if He has unique and absolute purity, spirituality and knowledge, it is only to be expected that He should have done the works that no other man did, and it is not so surprising that there should have been miraculous incidents in His history. The historical evidence in the case of each particular miracle can be dispassionately weighed; whereas, if there is not the preliminary faith in Christ, criticism of real value is impossible: *cadit quæstio*. But apart from this effect for faith, very much indeed is possessed by him who simply holds this conviction regarding the absolute righteousness and pure spirituality of Jesus Christ. Are moral and spiritual things to be regarded as only thin, airy, and unreal? Are the matters of sense alone real, or alone calculated to impart fixity, sureness, and stability to the things of spirit? This we entirely deny. The things which are unseen and spiritual are the surer and the more influential, and we can and ought to know them as such. On first turning to the subject of religion, we are impressed by the fact that realities of the mind, powers of conscience, affect us daily and in a variety of ways, along with what appear to be realities of sense or science (p. 57 ff.). The former are acknowledged to be the more substantial

kind; they act on us with commanding force; they rule and determine the bodily life. They are the means of showing us God, are a channel of *Revelation*. They remain, and will remain for life, the principal, and in a sense the only, realities. Material things and events are interpreted and dominated by means of them, and in comparison with them are but as shadows. We do not change this conviction as to the relation between things moral and spiritual on the one hand, and things material on the other, as we touch the subject of Christianity proper. This religion, consciously possessed, will not make us more earthly than we were! Rather it preserves and develops what is spiritual, increases our spiritual store. Through the most exemplary men who have been formed by it, it gives a fuller *Revelation* of God than we had, till at length we are fitted to grasp the meaning of the Person and Work of Christ, by whom the *Revelation* is made complete. Then the moral and spiritual essence of Christianity can be used to interpret and draw profit from the material elements of the scriptural history; but it gives them what value they have for us, and does not rest on them as surer, more trustworthy and precious than itself: to the unspiritual mind those material elements are an offence and folly. If, then, we apprehend Christ in His inner perfection, and can have (as we shall see) an abundant saving knowledge of God thereby, and a complete rule for our life, it is vain to say we are embracing phantoms, not substantial truths.

At present the conscience and spirit of man are strongly affected by the fruits of Christianity in the world, by the many high examples of Christian piety and integrity that are to be observed in Christendom, and are led to exalt the Christ who is the source from which they spring. Further, Christ Himself is now appreciated through the lineaments of His earthly *Life*, which have been brought into clearer relief in the last generation or two than ever they were

since the age of the Apostles. But in past times the fruits of Christianity, which are, of course, more goodly and extensive after a prolonged period of growth, were not so apparent; the conscience and spirit of men were not so alive to them, and the glory and greatness of Christ's Person were not seen to be so attractive. What had men formerly to rely on chiefly, when they sought to have faith in Him? They cleaved to the miracles, which they found to be satisfactorily proved to them simply by the recorded testimony of trustworthy witnesses. Because of these miracles they believed in Christ's Divine power, and on the ground of His Divinity again they trusted in the saving efficacy of His infinitely meritorious Death on the Cross. But not having been acquainted with the fruits of Christianity as they can be known by us in many of the generations who have gone before and in the best of our contemporaries, and not having been able to see the grand figure of Christ's historical Personality as it may now be apprehended by means of the recent investigations of His Life, they could not possibly, even with all that initial equipment of belief in all the miracles, advance in true Christian faith, righteousness, and love so surely or so far as there is now the means of doing. We are the more favoured heirs of the Christian ages; we may have a larger possession of the richest substance of the faith.

At the same time, we could not expect to have our peculiar advantages and all the aids that the people of a former age needed for their particular circumstances over and above. As they were deprived of our chief lever, we are not in possession of theirs. They required the aid of miracles, else they had little or nothing that was adapted to their spiritual purposes. Are we to say they were deceived, that the Christian religion could not have survived—could not even have originated—unless a groundless faith in miracles had been established somehow to bolster

it up for many centuries ; that the chief blessing, beyond comparison, to the world now and formerly, has been dependent for the main period of its duration on fables, and that because the world has been all along a mechanism ? It is hard to believe this, and happily we are not obliged to believe it ; for the spiritual philosophy of our day holds the world to be, not a mechanism, but a life (see, *e.g.*, the works of Ward, Paulsen, Eucken). Miracles are held by the scientific theology that now prevails in Germany, to have occurred : in particular, the Resurrection of Christ is admitted,—it is agreed *that* Christ rose and appeared to His disciples, though we do not know the precise manner of His rising and appearing. But the chief point is that a momentous fact of history has to be accounted for. Without the evidence of miracles, how did *Jews* of the olden time, with their profound conviction of the unutterable Majesty of Jehovah, bring themselves to call a man, no matter how good he was, God, and go forth, moreover, with effect to convert the world to their new faith ? Probably we can never decide definitely, and cannot expect unanimity among Christians, as to the particular recorded miracles that are sufficiently established by evidence. But we ought not to deny miracles ; for who could presume to say just how far the power of the sinless Christ could go ? Nor ought we to dogmatise about them. But we should gladly recognise that we for our part have to depend primarily on what Christ Himself desired all His followers to depend on—not signs, but righteousness, mercy, and truth, the most real witness of all, bringing God to us and taking us to God, keeping us near Him and in the peace of forgiveness, and showing a light and glory of goodness in Christ that illuminates all the world without and within, and is a standard and goal that suffices all our days for our every need.

## II

Scripture being the record of Revelation, formed, as respects the New Testament, by those who were contemporaries and followers of Christ, we turn our minds to it when we consider the question how far our faith in Christ is founded on historical reality. Having the religious spirit and life begun in us, we have the organ for interpreting the religious history of the past. We see a peculiar growth running through the ages, namely, religion, resembling but excelling the growths of philosophy, literature, and law in ancient Greece and Rome. Christianity, which is a more extensive and fruitful product than any of these secular formations, could not any more than these have sprung up from the consciousness of an individual or isolated group of individuals, and imposed itself on a world that was unprepared for it. The critical and historical treatment of the Old Testament makes the Revelation stand out before us in its vast magnitude and lengthened development, so that it becomes absurd to deny the spiritual history, as it would be absurd to deny, *e.g.*, the history of classical literature. Only there is the unique distinction that in the spiritual process in past ages faith recognises God's action, finds God there as He is in the spiritual life of man to-day. An unbroken religious movement is traced through the centuries. At first the invisible God is worshipped and served in Israel devoutly but imperfectly. Better conceptions of His spirituality and righteousness are gradually acquired; there is a purer worship and the rise of a great, inspiring Messianic hope. Next, there is a declension in the sphere of faith as prophecy sinks; there is an encasing of the faith in legal forms; but the ensuing darkness, together with political oppression, leads to a longing for help and consolation. In the fulness of time Christ came. The perfect way of salvation and blessing was revealed. Then

a new and striking departure took place when St. Paul extended the faith to the Gentiles. An amalgamation of Christian thought with Greek philosophy was formed; and so the narrative of progress runs on down to the present time. At this day the man of pious soul, having the requisite organ in his own quickened religious nature, sees there an advance of the same faith that he himself has begun to hold. Owing to the supreme magnitude of the issue, it needed many centuries for its formation. As has been stated, the history is indubitable; we also see the highest reach of the peculiar kind of life which we are concerned with in ancient Israel, when men of God learned the truth directly from Him as the revealing source, till at last the gift was completed in Christ. Then the later course of events, as appearing in the existence and fruits of the Christian Church, requires just such an one as Christ as the explanation or cause.

Having this confidence in the history and in God's working in the souls of the people, for without His presence and power the whole is meaningless,—knowing God in the history since He is in the same kindred growth to-day in the life of the faithful,—one is prepared to accept Scripture as authoritative, being the record of the Revelation in its original process and culminating epoch. Scripture is authoritative, but is freely and intelligently received. And the criticism of Scripture can and ought to be carried on continually as science, since it cannot undo the history, but tends to restore it in its living movement: criticism is calculated to secure the advantage that Revelation in its freshness and completeness is made to live again before us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this connection we may note as examples the works of Wellhausen, Robertson Smith, and others on the O.T., Weizsäcker on the *Apostolic Age*, Jülicher on the *Parables of Jesus*, the *Lives of Christ*, expositions of the Teaching of Jesus, recent investigations in the History of Religion and in the Origins of Christianity (by Weinel, Wernle, and others).

However, as was indicated, a special organ is needed in ourselves, consisting not of a new natural faculty, but of a prior conviction of faith, of vital religion as engendered through the influences now operating within us and around us. For without settled personal religion we should be liable to be carried away by a contemporary movement which dissolves faith in history. History is often taken now to be a science which demands full freedom, refuses to be a servant of the Church or of faith, pursues its scientific career without regard to consequences. It endeavours to explain Christianity itself, the influence of Jesus, as a product of prior, surrounding spiritual and moral agencies which operated of old in the East. Thus all becomes fluid; faith can cleave to nothing. The truth of Christianity is left an open question. At length a naturalism results. Hence we find that the organ of faith, *i.e.* spiritual life, is first necessary. Then we will hold that no research can destroy our belief in the religion of the past, or in the presence of God with those of old time, or in the fulness of the gift made to the world in Christ. No doubt we must admit that science, including history, must seek only the facts as they are or were. Yet in the sphere of religion the value of the result depends on the spirituality of the seeker. The highest things are hidden from the wise and prudent and are revealed to babes. General science also seeks only the actual facts and laws embodied in the world; yet, notwithstanding well-known poetic regrets for the loss of cherished sentiments as the result of its investigations—("What lovely visions yield their place to cold material laws!")—the work of science on the whole does not lead to an impoverishment, rather to an incalculable enrichment, of secular life. Nature in countless fields is subdued for the purposes of mankind. Why, then, should one branch of research in particular, the History of Origins in Religion, be supposed to be capable of emptying man's nature of

what is best in it and leaving the soul a dead waste? As in the other case, it is fitted to be of vast service to our life—in this instance the life of religion. Thorough scientific Biblical criticism promotes existing faith, but cannot be counted on to engender it—may rather make the attainment of it less likely than ever.

As so much depends in the issue on the existence or non-existence of this preliminary faith, the position of matters in this regard may be looked at a little more closely. We need to approach the study of Scripture not with blind prejudice in one sense or the other, either for or against the truth of its subject-matter, but with a reasonable faith. There needs to be a *general conviction*, on good grounds, of the truth and fulness of the Revelation, and of the sufficiency of the written record. In that case historical and scientific research of a more special kind benefits faith; but if the condition in question is not fulfilled, the effect of such learned inquiry may be that the possibility of gaining religious faith is diminished or lost. Thus one man finds that historico-critical investigation brings the spirituality and permanent power and value of the Revelation more and more clearly to light; another—say, of the school of Renan—is confirmed by the same means in the belief that the whole religious movement detailed in the Bible may be explained by natural causes without the action or even the existence of God being required. The specific result is due to the mind that one brings to the examination of Scripture. First, then, one can and ought to have the life of religion begun in oneself, religion, too, as based on Revelation (p. 99 ff.). Then the same peculiar, God-given life of the soul is observed in purer form in Scripture: the God-fearing man recognises there, too, a real Revelation, but a fuller Revelation than he had; he discerns the beginnings and the long-drawn-out growth. The history is seen to culminate in Christ, and

the early process, as a whole, including the defects and imperfections of Old Testament belief and practice, is illuminated and explained by that completed issue. And the subsequent history of the Christian Church is found to be inexplicable without the historical Christ of the New Testament. This faith, with which Scripture is approached and accepted in substance, is a reasonable faith; private religion, which is itself reasonable, is necessary, and in connection with the main ascertainable facts is sufficient, to make it such.

True, there is at present a certain difficulty in bringing with one to this inquiry into the matter of Scripture a trust that is settled and unquestioning. If there is a ready sympathy with the heavenly message which is said to have been communicated of old, preliminary doubts are equally likely to be entertained or to be mixed with the faith. It is often thought and said in effect that since everything else is changed in these times, people may well demand a new religion and a new Bible next. Can we be expected to trust, and can people trust for all time to come, the same things in religion that were accepted hundreds or thousands of years ago? Now, it is a hasty supposition that is formed when it is imagined that all things except the Christian religion change as the centuries roll on. The hearts of people are the same in all ages. And the earth and stars, or, at least, the laws that pervade them, are also stable or constant: men have slowly gained and are still gaining a deeper insight into those laws and the constitution of visible objects, but the Revelation around us in nature has not itself essentially changed. Its marvels and principles are hidden in it from the foundation of the world. There is another, a spiritual, Revelation perfected in Christ. It also is not fully comprehended; there has been a growing acquaintance with it. But it remains complete itself; its main truths, as long since ascertained,

do not alter. What would be meant by a new religion? It must surely be a religion that acknowledges God. Or would one with no God, *i.e.* Atheism, be preferable to the faith we have inherited? Clearly, there must be in future a continuation of faith in God. And can we desire a better conception of Him, or imagine higher truth relating to Him, than that which is put before us in the Old and New Testaments, where He is represented as a spiritual God, possessing all wisdom, love, and power, and is made known by Christ as a perfectly righteous and merciful Father? Try to change any of those qualities—say that God has no wisdom, or love, or power, or righteousness, or mercy—and you at once of necessity refuse to call that altered being your God. Then, on finding oneself sinful, is there any better way that can be devised for recognising God in peace, or turning to Him without terror, than the New Testament method of repenting, trusting, and reforming? Or, if it is asked what is a perfectly correct and exemplary life for one to live on earth, can we require a better presentation than Christ's ideal of manhood, than the example of Him who spoke only words of truth, righteousness, and grace, who exhibited all the most excellent traits of manhood as was already explained, who was all His days pure without and within, who spent His life solely for the well-being of others, and remained thus spotless and true till death? Is that example of Christ not high or good enough for one? That might be said by a person who had attained to Christ's level, and was dissatisfied, wanting to rise farther. Let one first become as Christ was, and it will be time enough then to ask for a better or loftier pattern, or to try to describe a better. How vain to think of a need of improvement in this regard! But Christ's goodness, on the other hand, may seem too lofty. Then, would we prefer an example with some taint of sin remaining

in it? Could one go before God desiring that He would *not* put before us for imitation a character that was altogether unexceptionable? In short, the Revelation we have cannot be superseded even in idea by a better.

The Bible is not that Revelation; it is the written record of it. There might have been the Revelation without the writing; but the record is a vast additional benefit conferred on men in the Providence of God. Other records of history are frequently improved on as time goes on. For example, there have been many histories of England—by Macaulay, Froude, Green, Freeman, and others. The later writers of history seek to improve on the books already in the field, by trying to produce narratives which are truer to the actual facts of the past. They seek contemporary evidence, as from documents discovered in public libraries, or in the charter-chests of old influential families. Can we by similar means or by any means get a truer record than we have of the Revelation once made among the old Jews? There was a dream among the men of the Enlightenment, the Rationalists of the latter part of the eighteenth century, and, later, among the extreme Tübingen critics, that such a revision of the story of Revelation might be attained. They would fain have had a history which reduced Christianity to a phase or particular illustration of natural religion merely. But when this has been tried, the result has been found utterly disappointing. Nature is a terrible mystery; it conceals God as surely as it reveals Him; it leaves men in want and fear; they are driven from it in their extremity to the religion of Scripture as altogether higher, clearer, and fuller, and to Christ as the perfect Revealer of the Father, and needed in that perfect character to explain history. And thus they are drawn again to the religion of miracles; for Christ is Himself the chief and permanent miracle.

No doubt, people can do many striking things now that could not be achieved a hundred years ago or less. But even so, it must be plain that it is beyond the power or wit of any living man to replace the written narrative of the Bible by a better. How is the modern man to proceed so as to get his "truer" story of the bygone events? If he goes out to the localities concerned, the people there are of another faith, the Mohammedan, and cannot enlighten him about his own. And the hills and streams in the East cannot answer his questions. Buried cities and inscribed tablets, it is true, are sometimes dug up, and there is light thrown on things which are stated in Scripture. That light is to be welcomed, but its value might easily be exaggerated. For the Revelation was not made to the stones or bricks of cities, but to a succession of living men who have long since passed from the earth. Hence the best record attainable is that which we have in the Bible, since it was written by those men who received the Revelation, or by their contemporaries in Israel who were *en rapport* with it and under its power, by men who were themselves concerned in the events that are described, or who in some cases lived soon after them. And would we have a Bible like the *Koran*, supposed to be true to the letter, and so inevitably putting the letter above the spirit?<sup>1</sup> Then everything about the writers shows that they had no unworthy or selfish interest to serve; they do not, with blind zeal, glorify their own nation or Church, but often represent it as backsliding and rebellious; or it is shown to be in perplexity regarding matters of faith and practice. The authors of Scripture are exceptionally pious and upright, having the single aim

<sup>1</sup> The New Testament is a sufficient record, as setting forth the Person of Christ. The dream of unearthing an earlier or better Gospel than any of the four we have, is vain. At an earlier time the disciples had not sufficient spirituality to weigh Christ's utterances (Dr. Moffat, *Historical New Testament*, Introduction).

of setting forth the truth and righteousness of God. They have been the means of conveying to the world its highest conceptions of truth and righteousness. They are the men of whom martyrs were made. Hence, if any writers are to be trusted, they are. And the chosen people lived and died for their faith, and accordingly they preserved and handed down the records of Revelation with scrupulous care.

Only there is always need to understand Scripture better. Here there is room for improvement, and scope for detailed scientific treatment,—the reality of the Revelation and the completion of it in Christ being acknowledged as a prior and settled conviction. That better understanding of Scripture serves the great practical purpose that faith is increased and made more spiritual, the highest truth that God has given is further elicited and clarified for us, and opposing sects of Christians are more disposed to tolerate each other, and sympathise with each other as brethren. They are led more and more to assign importance not to isolated texts, but to the main scope of the history, and the large principles of Scripture regarding which they are all agreed.

Coming to Scripture with this general conviction, this reasonable faith, we will welcome the historical and scientific investigation of its contents, expecting only benefit, and knowing that the truth in its essence and its finished form as recorded can sustain no harm. The reasons which lead us to turn to Scripture as authoritative do not warrant us in looking for inerrancy in it. But from what has been said, it will be apparent that inerrancy is not required for our spiritual purpose.

### III

As regards Christ in particular, a thorough scientific examination of the history makes it a matter that allows

of no doubt in the mind of any critic of the present day that the principal and fundamental element of the consciousness of Jesus was His sense of unique Sonship to God the Father, a Sonship that was perfect in every relation, and of cosmical and eternal significance. Further, as the scientific inquiry brings out, all the first Christians were convinced that Jesus stood in that relation to the Godhead; the burden of the apostles' preaching, as they went out to convert the world, was that Jesus is the Son of God (the Son of God with power). And, again, both on the ground of certain express statements in the New Testament, and from the obvious assumption on which the general speech and practice both of Jesus and His apostles are based, we learn that unmistakable Divine rank was held to have belonged to Him, that Sonship in His case meant the sameness of His Being or substance with that of the Father, and further implied that His spiritual nature was grounded eternally in the being of the Godhead—that from all eternity He had been pre-existent.

Scripture is authoritative; it tells of a revelation from God which reaches far higher than our knowledge of spiritual things extends, and of a consummation in Christ which is necessary for the explanation of the origin of the Christian Church and the results which have descended to us. But though that is so, we will not be content, when Scripture teaches, *e.g.*, that Christ is God, with merely assenting to that statement, or professing to assent to it, with the understanding. We shall want to assimilate even that highest truth. The way in which we approach the matter, the preparation for it there is in ourselves, its meaning for us, and the use to which we can put it, are of the first consequence. Obviously, from what has previously been said, the contents of Scripture have to be progressively apprehended, as our inner spiritual faculty or power of appropriation is improved. The beginner

cannot possibly take in the whole range of its substance, nor will the most advanced Christian hold that the Revelation has nothing more to impart to him: there is for each one a life-long process of assimilation. Now, at one stage of the process the individual is advancing towards that article of belief which we are at present concerned with—the belief, namely, in the Divinity of Christ. What is the nature of the advance at that particular juncture? What aids are there to the faith that is contemplated? What stepping-stones are available by the way, so that one may be assisted to rise? What features of the unique personality of Christ may one expect to grasp in the first instance, so that in the strength of that attainment one may pass on to the completion of faith? Now, it is much if we are convinced of Christ's sinlessness, of His complete disinterestedness or love, His perfect endurance of the intensest sorrow out of love to God and man, and His full knowledge of God (*supra*, p. 147 ff.). And all this the history constrains us to admit: deny any of the qualities or merits, and the course of events at the origin of Christianity—in particular, the firm trust of the first Christians—becomes inexplicable. But if we accept them, at once we mark the uniqueness of Jesus, a peculiar pre-eminence attained by Him among all the sons of men. He had the Spirit of God without measure: this differentiates Him from all others who have ever lived on earth. We are in the atmosphere of thought, in which we are disposed and led to ascribe to Him the attributes of the Deity. If it still seems that as being man He is like His brethren, especially the most pious and upright among them, we may well find that we ought rather to take a higher view of men than we often do, remembering that in their degree they have the Spirit of God in them, than a lower view of Christ. But the nature and rank of Christ are best brought home with

felt power to faith when we have regard to the benefits which are obtained through Him,—a matter which remains to be considered in another chapter. So Luther taught in the *Greater Catechism*<sup>1</sup> that God is one from whom we expect all good; and Melanchthon declared that to know Christ is to know His benefits. Now, our faith discovers that through Christ we have full peace with God, that through Him we are kept in all circumstances near God as our God, and that He furnishes a perfectly holy and gracious example for imitation, and that it is one towards which we may ceaselessly approximate but which we can never equal. These benefits He can secure for people of all nations and all times. Other most eminent men have had the genius of a particular people concentrated in them, but here is a Being whose spiritual and moral power is inexhaustible and of universal efficacy. What man could be imagined as capable of accomplishing so much, and what more could one of the highest heavenly rank do for us, and what more do we need? Thus the Christian comes in a real and it might almost be said in a natural way, in religious and moral practice, to regard Christ as clothed with attributes of divinity. Such practice fitly precedes the application of titles to Him, and is, according to His own declaration, immeasurably better than to be satisfied with calling Him Lord, Lord. The titles will follow for the purposes of clear thought and expression, and for the perfecting of the faith.

At the same time, while we are thus prepared to admit in a real way Christ's claim to be eternally One with the Father, we should refrain from speculating or dogmatising about the eternal life of the Godhead, where so little can be known. A wholesome Agnosticism is of value in this sphere, acting as a check to the attempt to go behind Revelation. And the ends of faith are served by this

<sup>1</sup> *Luther's Primary Works*, edition by Wace and Buchheim, p. 34.

restraint ; for, as we cannot worship an unknown God, no more can we worship one who is comprehended by us. We bow with the utmost reverence and awe before the majesty of the God who truly manifests Himself to us in perfect goodness and self-sacrificing mercy, and yet remains in His eternal essence incomprehensible.

## IV

As we may be led up by suitable preparation to the belief in Christ's divinity, and trained to act in the light of that truth, we likewise need to be prepared for the belief in His Resurrection ; and on attaining to this latter conviction, we are, of course, confirmed in our trust with regard to His Divine rank ; indeed, if He had yielded permanently to death, faith in Him, as we shall see, would have been grievously shaken, or it would not have survived at all.

But faith in the Resurrection of Christ is not to be insisted on at the initial stage of Christian life. No doubt it has often been argued that as the Church was formed in consequence of the glorious event of the Resurrection, and the fresh victorious power acquired thereafter by the first Christians, people are not warranted now in expecting faith to be awakened in themselves except when they turn to the *crucified and risen* Christ ; any other course, it is supposed, would be arbitrary. Again, it may be urged that, since the authors of the New Testament were enabled to *compose* the Gospel records of our Lord's earthly ministry only in the light of the Spirit that was imparted to them as the result of their faith in the Resurrection, we in turn cannot expect to *understand* those records of the life without possessing that light and that crowning faith ourselves. They could not understand or describe the part except in the light of the whole and of the end : are we entitled to

assume that we may appreciate the part without the whole, the image of Christ as He lived and moved in Palestine, without taking account of the signal triumph at the close? Still further, we say that Christ is known through His works which still survive—through the Church and the best people in it. But these fruits themselves, the very formation of the Church, would have been impossible without the assurance on the part of the first Christians that Christ had risen. Once more, therefore, our position implies the acceptance of the Easter news by those first witnesses; and it might plausibly enough be maintained that what is a necessary implication it is better that we should openly admit. These are specimens of the arguments that are used in support of the contention that faith in the Resurrection is *ab initio* an element of all living faith in Christ.

Nevertheless, we say that much truth regarding Christ may be grasped with profit by the quickened soul long before one is capable of receiving for edification the truth as to His Resurrection. The impression that Christ was defeated was naturally a strong one on the morrow of the Crucifixion: that crushing thought was naturally the uppermost in the disciples' minds, and they were helpless till it was removed. It is not the first and uppermost thought now. There are signs of success and power and truth which have long been apparent over Christendom, and to these, to the God they manifest, we do well to give heed in the first instance. Further, the Resurrection was to the Apostles and their companions a matter of direct observation. Our situation is widely different. We are dependent on testimony; and the mind we bring to it determines the conclusion at which we arrive in reference to it. There is a present life in the Church, and a world of righteousness before our eyes; and it is *that* life that *directly* originates life now in each new disciple, that righteousness which com-

mends itself as the immediate and unmistakable Revelation of God's will. The Apostles yielded to what most strongly impressed them personally, and in like manner we yield in the first instance to what most strongly and directly impresses us—the manifestations, though different, being in both cases from God.

And if through the life in the Church we are drawn nearer to the living God and Father, we obtain the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that animated the Apostles. As they were fitted to narrate the earthly life of Christ, we are taught by the same higher power that actuated them to appropriate the matter they wrote, as we find it to be for our edification. And obviously we require first to know the nature of the Person that rose; from this the Resurrection derives its significance,—from its being the Resurrection of the perfect Son of God. The disciples themselves first knew Him in part, by lengthened intercourse with Him during His ministry; that was real and valuable knowledge as far as it went, and it was never afterwards set aside. It shows what is possible for us.

There remains the point that the Resurrection is necessarily implied in the present existence of the Church and all that it includes—in the marvellous product which we often point to as disclosing what the essence and image of the Founder had been. Now, it cannot be held that to all the spiritually-minded, at every stage of their religious life, this appears a necessary implication; and it would be unwise to put pressure on all of them with the view of inducing them so to regard it. Other possibilities as to the origin of the Church suggest themselves; or many prefer to leave the matter unexplained till they have a firmer grasp of the necessary data. The present fruits of Christendom are ascribed meantime to the power of Christ's perfect Personality, though there is no certainty as to the connection of cause and effect at every point or period. At all events,

many such persons, living in habitual communion with God and pursuing the worthiest aim in life, are prepared to believe in the spotless spiritual character of Jesus, as keeping them near to God, and affording precious food for their faith and an ideal for the practice of their life, before they can sincerely and profitably assent to such a miracle as Christ's Resurrection.

Nothing would be easier, perhaps, than an intellectual assent to this article of belief, the Resurrection of Christ. But what is wanted in this matter as in others is that there shall be no mere *opus operatum* of the intellectual order, an acknowledgment which is unspiritual and harmful (compare the similar case, afterwards to be discussed, of a merely formal belief in salvation through the Cross of Christ), but a faith which is articulated with an existing spiritual possession in us. A faith is desiderated that truly seizes the event through which the great Redemption is complete, and without which there would be a keenly felt defect in the gifts of God, however glorious these are otherwise found to be.

As one lives then with God and in the light of the Christian knowledge which is obtained, but without as yet holding the trust in Christ's Risen Life, one's spiritual life is developed, and the truth of Christ is more fully and clearly apprehended as time passes. There is a growing product in the soul of the believer, a product which is richer than anything of earth, which is kindred with God, and has been formed by His co-operation. It is recognised by the possessor as too precious to be destroyed: God will not annihilate at the last the spirit which He Himself has assisted to mould in conformity with His own original design. Having this hope or trust in Immortality as a growing but intimate personal conviction, discerning in ourselves that which approves itself as beyond the power

of death, we will conclude that the perfect spirit of Christ was not extinguished when He was crucified. It is not merely by our own power that we gain the hope of Immortality; we are raised to it by means of Christian faith already active in us; and so through Christ Himself we are enabled to believe in His continual life. And then, when He is thought of as living after death, it appears credible that for an urgent purpose a manifestation of His life was made to the earliest disciples. We bring the intimate personal feeling, or disposition to trust, to the authoritative Revelation.

A growing hope or trust needs to be confirmed, definitely settled. Now we could not wholly trust Christ, however pure and lofty His Personality, and however perfect His endurance appeared to be, as we would trust the infinite God,—if the Risen Life is disregarded, and Christ is viewed as overcome by death. The power evinced in meeting death, the faith, the love, were indeed marvellous beyond description or thought. But even so they are not strictly proved to be infinite, or the same as the power and love of God, till God recognised them as such by raising Christ up to heavenly glory. Without the Resurrection we could not say there had been a full and adequate Revelation of God to man. Nor would there have been a perfect Redemption,—a Redemption not only from sin, but from the world and death and the iron law of natural causation, if Christ had Himself yielded permanently to death and to the power of the natural world. Thus there would have been a distressing want, possibly involving despair, although so very much else had been disclosed, if there was not also the one triumphant occurrence which was required to make the Revelation perfect.

However, we ought not to say that, before we accept the truth of the Resurrection, Christ with His faith in God and in perfect Divine righteousness would have to be taken

as only an enthusiast, though one of the noblest type,—as one who was himself mistaken in his trust, and who could not therefore reveal any truth of God in which we could place reliance. For we believe in God before we believe in Christ. We believe in God on the ground of spiritual and moral realities which are to be trusted, and not to be set aside as the subjective creation of enthusiasm or fanaticism. And then Christ's *pure mind* is to us a fuller Revelation of God than we had. Just because we so view Christ, does His Resurrection have its proper meaning and value for us when we come to assent to it. The Resurrection of a common man would have been a portent of no spiritual significance, or rather it would have been incredible.

The faith of the Christian lays hold at length of the experimental truth that the Person of Christ is now Exalted and Glorified, as St. Paul found Him to be.<sup>1</sup> We cannot, indeed, assert or think of communion with the Exalted Christ by means of a miracle, by a continuous manifestation of supernatural power, in the life of the Christian of to-day. But, apart from such a conception, which runs counter to all our positive, sober thought, we are insensibly but surely led on to the apprehension of Him as Living and Exalted. The figure of our Lord that is envisaged, as we learn of Him from the Gospels and from the effects of His work during the Christian centuries, takes on glorious and universal attributes. For we do not contemplate One who is now localised, or subject to weariness or suffering or any limitation of power, or placed under temporary or national conditions. The Christ that now rules in Christendom is a Glorified figure; we look to a Power that appears glorious as the light. And it is universal in its scope and efficacy, the source of new and special blessings to people in all parts of the world and through all the successive genera-

<sup>1</sup> *Vid. Somerville, St. Paul's Conception of Christ.*

tions, according as the peculiar ideals and requirements of the various lands and times may have been. Thus we find that we have to do with a living Power, and that there is a universal reach and fulness in the Personality of Christ. The individual Christian among ourselves has his distinctive necessities, cravings for goodness and blessedness in forms that would be resplendent in the sight of his own soul, that would be to him fresh and ennobling, equalling and excelling the loftiest conceptions he has ever formed. And there is a Revelation from God, given in Christ, that responds to every legitimate and pure craving of the kind; and, being universal in its import, it can fill the heart of each newcomer in the world, as it has filled the hearts of countless others. Christ ever lives. Only, as there is no miracle disclosing His present nature, people would be in danger of forming wholly arbitrary conceptions of it, each having a view of his own, were there not a rule and standard for our guidance. That there may be no extravagance on the part of His followers, or trust in mere private fancies, it has to be remembered that the Living and Exalted Christ is the same person that once was seen on earth and was depicted in the Gospels, and that the best blessing that can yet be conferred through Him is a spirit and power that will make His follower live as Jesus then lived, having the same ends in view as He had, righteousness in thought, word, and deed, love to God and man.

The knowledge that the better life of the Christian believer is built up by the spiritual power of Christ living and working in his soul, perfects the faith that that soul too will live for ever. While the hope of our immortality disposed to the faith in Christ's Risen Life, there is action and reaction, once the latter faith is held. There is a marvellous connection and co-operation even on this earth —the limits on our side have already been alluded to—between the two spirits, the human and the Divine.

Hence the confident trust that what is formed by such heavenly means will be preserved for heaven. This present activity of Christ gives the ground of undying hope. So St. Paul held, as when he said, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

## PART III

### FORGIVENESS THROUGH CHRIST

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#### CHAPTER X

##### SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS PRIOR TO APPREHENSION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

FROM the study of the Person of Christ, we pass to the consideration of His Work. The two subjects cannot be entirely separated; as was explained above, a person is properly known only through his work. In the foregoing exposition of the nature of Christ's Personality, it is assumed that there is a growing apprehension of the spiritual blessings which Christ is the means of securing for the heart and life, or of His saving work. The latter subject now falls to be particularly treated in turn.

It was found that the simple return to God, together with the craving for pure righteousness in oneself, was the means of securing a wealth of what might truly be called Gospel blessings. Gently, insensibly, like the falling of the dew or the coming of the morning light, the Higher Presence is realised for good—when the greatest truths which are perceived for the time being are taken home by the heart and will. Not on all occasions when one thus does his part will the desired effect occur with full vividness, but at least it will often be so produced, and always with some

benefit at least. The way to God and to blessedness is known, only we cannot command His action; we can be regular in seeking, and can wait, and the waiting will not be in vain. One is abundantly blessed, and is on the way to overcome the world.

Further, though serious questions are yet raised as the nature of the righteousness which is required of us is more adequately realised, especially through the lives of the best people whom we come to know, the faith and the substantial benefits of faith can still be preserved nevertheless: even the high demands of righteousness, though they stir one up to earnest inquiry and endeavour, do not dismay the penitent and trustful (p. 127 f.). The course pursued is, from the first, and continues to be, essentially the Christian course, though for long Christ is not understood, and is perhaps not even named. We are led to the course in question through the influences surrounding us and operating on us in Christendom: by means of them Christ, it may be said, seeks the man before the man seeks Him. (Neither a Jew nor a heathen, applying only the specific means available for him as such, could attain to that precise quality of religious life.) Hence it is that from the outset, and through all conflicts that are in waiting, an ample measure of *gospel blessings* is gained.

But as there is admittedly much perplexity remaining when we ask how God can show favour to the sinner, to one whose sinful past is irrevocable and who even yet sins afresh, why not say at once that the simple and necessary course is to cleave to Christ's Cross for salvation, to sorrow for sin as it is seen in all its enormity in the death of our Lord, but with faith in His cleansing blood, in the free mercy that is extended to all who draw near to God pleading the infinite merits of His Son? Now, without doubt multitudes of our fellow-men have had the truth of salvation through the Cross of Christ brought home to

them in that seemingly direct and summary fashion. Many of the prayers and hymns that have long been current in Christendom appear sufficiently to attest the fact. Or the scheme of salvation, God's plan, viewed concisely from beginning to end, strikes many as a worthy and gracious scheme; and it is the thought of it, a large conception of the whole, that has acted decisively on them (p. 30 ff.). Where the truth in that finished form can be sincerely accepted, and is of undoubted value and power, one's course is clear: he ought to take the gift so presented as God's best blessing to him. On the other hand, many are obliged to admit that the profession of such faith would for them involve insincerity and unreality: if made, it would be a forced utterance, only a form of words. They cannot see or feel that Christ's goodness in death, however great, can alter the fact that they have been sinful, or benefit them. Someone has said, "It matters little to me that I have had a perfect brother; I want to be perfect myself." And so the objections run on. What are these seekers after God to do? It is with regard to them alone that the problem exists.

Now, it may safely be said that one could not set himself a more hopeless task than if he were to try to devise a short and simple formula of the doctrine of Christ's Atonement which would at once commend itself to all intelligent inquirers. It is contrary to the practice of people who have been subjected to the scientific discipline which is now common, to "accept," without adequate connecting links, a momentous truth like that contained in the Atonement, to assent to it without traversing the stages of thought and practice which lead up to it, without the requisite intellectual and moral preparation that casts light upon it. It would be like substituting a dead abstract theory for a living and

fruitful growth within the spirit, or like putting arithmetic or algebra in place of the tangible gifts of the earth, or a metaphysical doctrine for a glowing and inspiring intuition. If it is said, God will not interpose in the life to aid and bless it till there is faith in Redemption through our Lord's Cross, it may be affirmed with equal or greater certainty that there are many who will not attain to that blessing of faith in the finished work of Christ if they are living without God, if they simply attack the problem by the sheer force of their intellect, or, indeed, before they have long and patiently walked with God in piety and in the endeavour after moral integrity. As surely as higher help and guidance are needed for the attainment of a true Christian life, they are necessary for the acquisition of real faith in the efficacy of Christ's work in death. And God's working in the normal case is slow, whether in the individual man or in history, being, even in the case of the individual, the development often of years. If there has not been the preliminary discipline under God, continued as long as the circumstances of the person require, man's best endeavour to master the truth regarding the Atonement does but exhibit it as a tissue of contradictions.

Indeed, there are actual dangers incurred if a concise statement of the Atonement through Christ's death is offered, the danger on the one hand of calming the irreligious, and on the other of checking the better life of those who have gained a faith. As regards the former class, those who are essentially irreligious, or whose religion is at a very low ebb, the discipline of life, as will be readily understood, is apt to appear too hard and uninviting to them. One of this number would be glad to know, especially in view of the eternal future and what it may possibly have in store, that his sin was covered by what Christ has accomplished; but to live with God, to

love the things He loves, to strive to conform to His righteous will, and to continue always to maintain these aims and practices, is felt to be more than one would undertake, even to secure that coveted knowledge. Owing to this sluggishness of the will, and the lingering effects of the teaching which represents the acceptance of the doctrine of the Atonement as the root and beginning of all true Christian religion, people in crowds still let their minds run in a vague, lifeless manner after some cut and dried scheme of salvation through Christ's Cross, and try to suppose that because of these few indistinct thoughts God will somehow make matters right for them in the end. Religion is disliked, but one would not care to be among its avowed opponents; a future life seems possible, and so religion, if the name may be used, is felt to be a necessity. So regarded, it is a necessary evil! What are the terms on which salvation is to be procured? they would say. State them simply and concisely. Such persons are ready to "believe," willing to assent to anything whatever that has the semblance of plausibility and is not palpably absurd. They want to believe—and be done with the whole matter. There the ruling thought is brought to light. A minimum of so-called religion would gladly be yielded for the advantage of being able to devote oneself in peace to earthly interests or pleasures exclusively. In these circumstances, it cannot appear injurious to the cause of vital religion if it is held to be impossible to gratify a desire of the kind. On the contrary, it seems plain that the cause of Christ is benefited by the very fact that the truth is and must be hidden from such persons, that the Atonement cannot be made clear to them in few words, or indeed in any manner, while they remain as they are. An emphatic warning and a little reflection on their own part ought to show them that they are seeking the comfort of religion by a wrong method.

And, further, in view of cases like theirs, one is led to the conviction that, while the preaching of the Cross is wisdom, there has often been an unwise preaching of the Cross.

And, again, there is the danger that, if an instant acceptance of salvation through Christ's Cross is demanded, the earnest seeker who had begun well may be led to abandon the noble task of coping with spiritual difficulties by the cultivation of living faith, by patient inquiry and effort, and to fall back into the class of the blind and indifferent, who would end all such trouble by a vain profession. The prospects which were so bright are darkened ; the hold on reality becomes a hold on nothing. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Others, again, men of honourable intention, finding that the profession of trust in these cloudy mysteries of the Cross would not be strictly ingenuous and justifiable in their case, are driven to avert their thoughts from them altogether, and to restrict their efforts to the pursuit of common morality, religion in every form being ignored. It is a terrible illustration of the harm that may spring from the practice, well-meant though it be, of pressing beliefs on those who are not able to bear them.

For those whom we are at this point directly concerned with, for those who have living faith in God, who set themselves to please Him in righteousness, and who enjoy a large measure of valuable blessings as the fruit of their religion, but who cannot seize in any form the significance for them of Christ's work in death, the best, the most wholesome, and the only promising course of procedure is to continue turning with filial desire to God, to live as in His presence, and to follow hard after Him by working righteousness, rising up as they can do in His strength after every fall, and craving and striving for more light. There can be no objection to such action on the score of morality ; one is pursuing forthwith the highest goodness

he can conceive, goodness in every department of life and thought. Nor from the point of view of Christianity: in the gospel, truth and honesty are urgently insisted on, and falsehood is flatly condemned. One is seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, as Christ enjoins; and the fact that God manifests Himself as a Friend and liberal benefactor attests the Divine approval of the choice and path that are followed. The truth in its satisfying fulness, moreover, can best be ascertained by one who lives with God: there is in the cases contemplated no other means of acquiring it. If one of this number asks, What should I believe in the meantime as to the significance of Christ's death for the soul's salvation? the reply would be, Without the necessary training or perseverance in piety and integrity, you cannot believe anything regarding it to good purpose, and it would be vain and probably hurtful to try. The sense of ignorance in the matter can, however, preserve the feeling of humility before God, and quicken the desire for an increase of blessing, and so give promise of the greatest abundance of good yet to be vouchsafed. Besides, what would you do if you did obtain clear insight as to the redemptive value of our Lord's final suffering? You would have to love God with your whole heart, and to aim principally at doing His will in the world after the manner of Christ. This you can do to a great extent now, and you even feel bound to do it; and never, even though fortified with the amplest faith in the finished work of Christ, will you be able to do it to perfection. No doubt one may die in the interval, before having bowed in sincere worship before the Cross of Christ. This possibility certainly shows how needful it is to learn of God betimes, so as to arrive in the course of the earthly life, and as soon as may be, at the goal of a true apprehension of Christ's Atoning work. If, however, one is under his Father's care and tuition, the fact that in life

God loves and prospers him and gladdens him with light and consolation, should yield the comforting assurance that in death likewise he will be the Lord's. Would such person be safer on the only other alternative, namely, if he were to die with a merely formal and unreal confession of Christ on his lips? No; salvation is not by words, but by the sincere confession of the heart. But, in truth, there is no real grievance, and no ground for intense disquiet, as if the fulness of the gospel blessing were unwarrantably withheld. There must be a good cause for the delay. Should it not be matter for thankfulness that the treatment received has the effect of making one cleave firmly to God, with the sense of a great and pressing need that still remains, obliges one to do so till such time as the habit of resorting to Him is unchangeably formed, and He is loved as He ought to be for His own sake more than for His gifts? Better, at least, to be thus dealt with than to be prematurely gifted with fuller insight, such as might create an "assurance" of salvation, with the result that the inclinations which are directed to the world or to evil, inclinations which still continue strong and active, might become dominant through negligence and over-confidence, and God might once more be put out of mind. And there is a more exhilarating thought. An implicit trust in Christ may actually be evinced even in this hesitancy. There may be the latent conviction that His death is of unequalled value, and ought to have a clear and profound meaning for oneself. If there is, then the unwillingness and refusal to assent to any doubtful conception of its purpose and efficacy, or to any but the worthiest, is born not only of intellectual discipline gained from secular subjects, but of a precious seed of religious faith. The underlying trust is highly commendable, and will not be disappointed. And when the reward comes, it will be acknowledged that much kind-

ness was shown by the Providence that prevented one from contemplating with satisfaction any but the most glorious goal that was discernible. Thus, though his spiritual blessings are not yet all that could be desired, the person who dwells with God is in no evil case. *Impossibile est ut non lætetur qui sperat in Domino.*

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME RECENT EXPOSITIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

IT is often supposed that difficulties regarding the means of forgiveness are connected only with theological statements of the doctrine of the Atonement. The intellect, it is imagined, gets bewildered by the discussion of what is too high for it, whereas the heart of the pious person rests calmly in its clear vision and firm and satisfying conviction as to the things of Christ and of salvation: the plain, simple fact of the Atonement is enough for it. In a word, if we would reach the desired end, it is asserted that we must distinguish theology from religion, and seek contentment from the latter, not from vain reasoning. But in answer to this we have to say, that in these times of ours it is a question how the man of ordinary education can hold the religious faith in the Atonement at all: serious difficulties appear on the surface, and present themselves to every mind (see Archdeacon Wilson, *The Gospel of the Atonement*; Macmillan, 1899; Lect. i. pp. 10, 16; or, *The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought*, by various writers; Clarke & Co., 1900 (*passim*)). One must ask what the *fact of the Atonement* means. A meaningless fact is a useless fact. But when one attempts to state the meaning, the mere simplicity vanishes. No doubt theology differs from religion; yet there is an intimate relation between the two. Religion is not

thoughtless. And theology, as being the science of religion, and presupposing it, is not barren or abstract ratiocination, but implies the consecration and exercise of the intellect, in the highest sphere, for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. As in every other sphere, so here; there is a close and continuous interaction between science and practice: science is fruitful of practical results. So, too, even on the traditional view, the feeling of the heart was not conceived of as standing alone in religion; the truth was demanded; the law was known together with its crushing effect, and the covering for sin and guilt offered through Christ was accepted as the only effectual aid, because it was understood to serve the purpose of securing peace with God in a way that reason and conscience could appreciate. This was suitably explained to the understanding in preaching. Faith as *mere* feeling is unstable and vanishing; we want goodness and truth also. If feeling alone, the devotion of the heart, is supposed to be enough on the human side to constitute faith, we see at once that it is a poor faith, and that in these days of science and criticism it must be poor. At once questions relating to substitution, etc., emerge to nip the faith in the bud. We naturally, therefore, turn to recent expositions of the Atonement for direction to the puzzled understanding. In them we find vigorous and fruitful endeavours to utilise the light of general scientific truth, as it has been evolved in modern times, for the elucidation of the profound subject of the Atonement, and a firm trust that, as in times past, so still, the religious truth can and will be harmonised with the best moral instincts of men, and with their surest rational convictions.

John Macleod Campbell (*The Nature of the Atonement*, 3rd edition; Macmillan & Co., 1869) rejected everything of the nature of legal fiction, imputation of guilt, or substituted punishment in the Atonement. As towards

men Christ revealed the fatherly goodness and love of God, and as towards God He confessed our sins. "That oneness of mind with the Father, which towards man took the form of condemnation of sin, would in the Son's dealing with the Father in relation to our sins take the form of a perfect confession of our sins. This confession, as to its own nature, must have been *a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man.*" . . . "He who so responds to the divine wrath against sin, saying, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, who judgest so,' is necessarily receiving the full apprehension and realisation of that wrath, as well as of that sin against which it comes forth into His soul and spirit, into the bosom of the divine humanity, and, so receiving it, He responds to it with a perfect response,—a response from the depths of that divine humanity, and *in that perfect response He absorbs* it. For that response has all the elements of a perfect repentance in humanity for all the sin of man,—a perfect sorrow—a perfect contrition—all the elements of such a repentance, and that in absolute perfection, all—excepting the personal consciousness of sin;—and by that perfect response in Amen to the mind of God in relation to sin is the wrath of God rightly met, and that is accorded to divine justice which is its due, and could alone satisfy it." . . . "It was not in us so to confess our own sins; neither was there in us such knowledge of the heart of the Father. But if another could in this act for us,—if there might be a mediator, an intercessor;—if the Son of God has, in the power of love, come into the capacity of such mediation in taking our nature and becoming our brother, and in that same power of love has been contented to suffer all that such mediation, accomplished in suffering flesh, implied,—is not the suitableness and the acceptableness of the sacrifice of Christ, when His soul was made an offering for sin, what we can understand?" (pp. 135 ff., 149).

Then the prospective aspect of the Atonement is said by Macleod Campbell to consist in making men see God's goodness and love as the light of their life, and confess their sins, participating in the confession with Christ, and in making them actually righteous like Christ, or imparting to them eternal life here and now.

In this celebrated and eminently spiritual book, we see that earnest craving for reality of faith which has more and more become a distinctive characteristic of modern religious thought. What has to be said of the alleged efficacy of Christ's confession of the sins of others may be reserved, in order to avoid repetition, till we consider another work which, on the point in question, resembles the above, and may therefore be taken next in order. This is the late Professor Moberly's *Atonement and Personality*; London, John Murray, 1901. Here there is much valuable matter, *e.g.*, on the nature of forgiveness as we know it in experience between man and man, and on the subject of the Person of Christ. On the latter topic it is said, "The phrase 'God and man' is, of course, perfectly true. But it is easy to lay undue emphasis on the 'and.' And when this is done—as it is done every day—the truth is better expressed by varying the phrase. 'He is not two, but one, Christ.' He is, then, not so much God *and* man, as God *in*, and through, and as, man. He is one indivisible personality throughout" (p. 96 f.).

But there is the distinctive and peculiar element that the salvation of men is said to depend on Christ's perfect *penitence* for the sins of the world. A good person, it is asserted, can be penitent for the sins of another. A good mother is more truly penitent for the sins of a grievously offending child than the child is or can be. The latter, just because so sinful, is comparatively callous; but the sorrow and shame of the transgression may break the mother's heart. Indeed, it is only the perfectly sinless

that can be perfectly penitent. A single lapse into sin dulls to some extent the moral capacity of the soul: that sin has a lasting effect; the penitence can never become ideally perfect. Accordingly, Christ, as entirely sinless, alone could perfectly repent for the sins of men. This He did, and thus He as the Representative of humanity opened up a way for perfect forgiveness to men, seeing that perfect forgiveness is the rightful return for perfect penitence (p. 121 ff.).

Now, here is an unusually clear issue. But we are obliged to withhold our assent to the statement that one person can repent for the sin of another. Hence, too, we must find that the sinless cannot repent at all. Sorrow, it is true, and even shame, there may be for the offence of another to whom one is related; but though these feelings have reached the greatest depth or intensity that may be imagined, there is not even a beginning of repentance. A *change* of mind, a turning round on sin by one who has yielded to it, is implied in repentance (*μετάνοια* = after-thought, change of mind). Dr. Moberly himself, when treating of certain familiar manifestations of penitence, has pointed out the fact of this change. "What we want to consider is the fullest import of the word *μετάνοια*,—containing sorrow, love, faith, and whatever besides,—as a real changedness of the life and the mind: nor indeed of the life and mind only—or anything else which can be even abstractly detached and considered apart from the unifying self; as a real changedness, then, not only of life or mind, but of the very self that lives and wills" (p. 30). Now, the unoffending person has never changed his mind or life in regard to the offence he has shunned, and he could not undergo a change except for the worse. However sorry he may be for the fall of another, he was always of one mind as to the iniquity of such a lapse, both before and after the particular instance. In

regard to the sin in question, there is no change of thought or practice in his case, no after-thought, no repentance. Hence the perfectly sinless person, who never changed his mind or course of life as respects any moral question, could not repent at all. That "real changedness," which was said to be included in the import of *μετάνοια*, is never predicated of Christ by Professor Moberly; and, of course, it is utterly inapplicable to Him. And yet it is declared that He was *perfectly penitent* for the sins of mankind! It seems clear that this is no explanation of the subject, but that a new and insuperable difficulty is introduced. There is ample ground for the trenchant criticism of Dr. Rashdall in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (January 1902). If Christ was perfectly penitent—to adopt the supposition for a moment—why should He have to die? And, again, how could *His* perfect penitence warrant the treatment of men, who are, even the best of them, still sinners and imperfectly penitent, as righteous persons? He was the Representative of Humanity? But men were not identified with Him in the only way that could have availed for them. As the stern facts show, the moral and spiritual difference was not obliterated.

Albrecht Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, vol. iii., 3rd edition, 1888 (1st edition, 1874), translated in 1900 (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh). The first volume, containing the History of the doctrine, was translated into English in 1872; the second volume (1874), giving the Biblical matter on which the doctrine is based, has not yet been translated.

In a brief reference to Ritschl's monumental and very suggestive work, one can only bring out some of the salient features of it. On the subject of the means of attaining to justification, he teaches that it is primarily the Church, not the individual, that Christ redeemed. Our Lord, especially in His closing discourses, contemplated the com-

munity of the faithful that He was to found on earth. According to Ritschl, there are serious practical evils which are only to be avoided by giving this prominence to the Church in the matter of justification. The Pietists, *e.g.*, endeavoured by a "conflict of penitence" to merit forgiveness,—their personal faith was supposed to have such value in God's sight that He found them entitled to receive grace. And Mystics, by overleaping the appointed means in the Church, and seeking direct ecstatic union with the God-head, cease to hold anything in common with Christianity proper. Without any such vain conflict as Pietism recommends, and without presuming, like the Mystics or fanatics, to be independent of Christian means, the individual, according to Ritschl, should trust God's grace, provided that he is a member of the Church or community that Christ has redeemed. "A man does not experience the fact of his justification so much in a contemplative act which presents to his mind justification or Divine pardon in an isolated way, but rather in trust in God, which embraces likewise the believer's situation in the world. He has a right to feel this trust, and is led to exercise it, just because he acknowledges Christ as the Reconciler of the community which He founded, of which he deliberately reckons himself a member" (*Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 174).

Here it occurs to us to ask whether the individual who is only as yet at the stage of seeking a personal faith can have a living and fruitful persuasion that the Church has been redeemed by Christ. Has he the spiritual mind, the comparatively advanced religious life, that is needed to create that conviction as to Christ and the Church? If there is obscurity and liability to error in regard to the mode or efficacy of Christ's work for the individual soul, there must surely be still greater haziness as the Church and Christ's relation to it are contemplated. To one who

is yet without private faith—and such person is in view in the quotation given above, and elsewhere generally, as the contrast with Pietists and Mystics implies—questions relating to the Church and its status must seem to belong to the region of dim, impalpable abstractions. Till he has a faith or vital religion as one who directly deals with God (though the faith is occasioned, stimulated, by contact with Christian people, or by the use of means supplied in the Christian community), language about Christ and the redemption of the Church will seem empty of meaning.

On the other hand, it is admitted by Ritschl, when dealing with those who contend that an immediate personal relation to Christ and to God is the kernel of the Christian life, that “every religious judgment, and so every devout consideration of God’s leadings and claims, as well as of Christ’s benefits, is due to our regarding God and Christ as present.” However, he says it is for theological science to point out the implications underlying such faith and practice. “One who understands physiology and psychology acts like every other man on the assumption that in his sense-perceptions he stands immediately over-against things. But in his scientific estimate of such occurrences, the physiologist and psychologist points out that these include a very complicated process of mediation, in which the judgment of the beholder modifies the physical impressions of light on the eye, so as to determine the size and distance of things in the way which we think a matter of immediate perception. In the same way the theologian is obliged to trace back the immediate contemplation of Christ in the exercise of devotion to all the historical presuppositions of that act, and to remind his readers of these, in order that devotion may not be taken up with arbitrary distortions of the picture of Christ” (p. 596).

According to this latter account of the subject, we should have to regard the conception of the redemption of

*the Church* by Christ as belonging to the theology or science of the matter. People generally, whether they understand the science or not, are not determined by it in acquiring or cultivating faith, any more than they think of physiology when using their eyes. At least practice goes before science, as in the illustration given, and so generally, and is only corrected by it where correction is necessary. Thus in religion the primary and normal practice for all would be to approach God and Christ directly, with the aid of the means afforded by the Church or otherwise, but without utilising the theological or scientific conception of the redemption of the Church itself. But this is in contradiction to Ritschl's main and fundamental position, according to which the normal procedure is for the individual to recognise the Church as having been redeemed by Christ, and to trust God's grace as being made sure to him when and because he is a member of that Church. The appeal to science does not commend the peculiar theology.

On the whole, it is apparent that Ritschl declines to give particular guidance to the individual as such. He emphasises the spiritual status of the Church and the privilege of membership, as warranting trust for salvation. Further than this he refuses to go: the relation of the individual soul to God is declared to be a matter of conscience for itself. And, again, he points out that there is a multitude of ways and aspects in which Christ may be apprehended, depending on age, sex, temperament, etc., whereas theology has to confine itself to principles, which are general. However, the evidences of one's reconciliation, the effects of it in the life, are set forth by him at great length,—such effects as trust in God's Fatherly Providence, prayer, patience, humility, and the perfecting of the life in a whole by the worthy discharge of the duties of one's particular vocation. And yet in this later Christian experience also the private conscience is normative, and here

too there are “diversities of gifts.” One desiderates a like specific treatment of the preliminary or incipient stage, as to which helpful direction is quite as needful. Instead of that we have a general principle touching the Church, which eludes the seeker like an airy intangible abstraction. Or it is a principle which vanishes into nothingness: we feel that there can be no second or sublimated redemption of the Church over and above the redemption of individuals in it. The old traditional theology had at least the great recommendation that it gave one personal guidance, and was readily applicable in preaching. It was pointed out by it that the law is known in its power and majesty to every heart, that it convinces man of sin and misery and helplessness, and that it is for him, therefore, to confess his sin in the light of Christ’s perfect righteousness in death, and to rest in the free mercy offered through Him to the penitent and believing. And we may rest assured that the demand for guidance will be persisted in. The science that is inapplicable to practice, or that cuts itself apart from practice, is justly discredited and classed with the outworn forms of Metaphysic. Such an outcome in respect to one most important article, the Atonement, is very strange in a theology that is avowedly and in the main based on the consideration of practice. And accordingly in the school that has been influenced by Ritschl, there have been strenuous efforts to advance from the ground he occupied, and to realise the means by which the individual as such, without that leap in the dark which the acceptance of the peculiar doctrine regarding the Church implies, may be brought to the saving knowledge of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. numerous articles in the *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* by Reischle, Otto Ritschl, Scholz, Weiffenbach, and others; and *Die Nachfolge Christi*, by Professor Johannes Weiss, and the vast literature that has sprung up on the subject of “Unterricht” in the Christian religion. Kaftan, *Dogmatik* (1st ed., § 63), does not reproduce Ritschl’s distinctive conception of the Reconciliation of the Church.

Ritschl's views were formed a generation ago, and since then the recognition of the law of continuity is more stringently insisted on in every sphere, including that of religion. There must be true development in the life of the soul, and no reliance at any point on an obscure or baseless abstraction. He has, however, greatly stimulated interest in the subject of the Atonement, although there is yet no consensus of thought, but rather great uncertainty as to the formulation of the doctrine. He exposes many untenable views which are often given out as modern, and shows by his wealth of historical knowledge that they are not modern at all, but of quite ancient date. He teaches, in opposition to the Church of Rome, but also as against many Protestants, that justification is indispensable before one can set himself with real freedom and independence, to discharge the moral tasks of life, or to become like Christ. Romanists, since, of course, in spite of *Gerechtmachung* they always sin, continue to be dependent, and this fact serves to keep the laity in subjection to the Church; though, on the other hand, it is given out by that Church's denial of Divine favour to those who are without her pale, that her members, and they alone, can count on salvation: thus either doubt or assurance can be fostered in the Church of Rome as circumstances require! Further, Ritschl explains how the family and not the State supplies fitting analogies for the matter of forgiveness: God is here to be viewed as Father, not as Judge or Lawgiver. A "conflict of penitence," as we saw, is disapproved on good grounds, and thus what would be a stumbling-block for many is taken away. And the death of Christ is viewed not in isolation, but as the consummation of the goodness and voluntary obedience manifested in His life. On the whole, as we can well understand, a keen interest in the question has been awakened by this theologian, and thought and inquiry are still in progress. And certain

lines indicated by Ritschl, and suggestions given by him, must be of pre-eminent and lasting value, as contributing to a solution of the problem.

The Ven. Archdeacon Wilson, "The Gospel of the Atonement" (*Hulsean Lectures*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1899), says (p. 88 f.): "No one can fail to notice that the Incarnation is assuming in theological preaching and teaching the place which, not long ago, was taken by the Atonement. The doctrine of the Incarnation is replacing the doctrine of the Atonement. . . . This implies that to the doctrine of the Incarnation, not to any theory of vicarious and equivalent sacrifice, and not to any transaction between the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, we are looking for an explanation of the process how Jesus Christ saves us from our sins and redeems all mankind.

"Let us say boldly that the Incarnation, that is, the life and death of the Christ,—for the life and death were equally necessary,—is the identification of the human and the divine Life. This identification is the Atonement. There is no other."

It is explained in the above work, with singular freshness and force, that Jesus, by revealing God through His human personality, showed thus that God and man are "*at one*," and showed what is possible and necessary for all men. When we, seeing the Life that was manifested realise this presence and working of God in ourselves, the power and joy and life of God are shared by us even here on earth. This means restoration to God, with all the blessedness that it implies. "The new life which Christ revealed does, when realised, so release men from sins as well as guilt; and this is the true forgiveness" (p. 117). (*So, i.e.*, primarily from the power, not the penalty of sin.)

In this fact, that the death of Christ is not viewed in isolation from the life, that the Incarnation is coming to have due significance assigned to it, there is, as Archdeacon

Wilson points out, "a most hopeful sign of progress in modern theology" (p. 88). As we turn to God and to goodness, even to the goodness embodied in the Church of our day, but especially if it is that which is seen in the Person of Christ, we are conscious recipients of the love of God. His peace begins to flow to us as a river. Here is a veritable gospel, at least a large part of the gospel, and it is declared with very impressive effect in these Lectures. The course which is described is open to all, and is fraught with rich blessings for all who enter on it.

There remains, however, the point, which the Lecturer, with a special purpose in view, was perhaps not concerned to discuss, whether enough is thus obtained. We cannot, as a rule, or for long, pass over this matter of sufficiency of good, when we are contemplating the *Gospel*, and especially the *Gospel of the Atonement*. And what we find is that by following the path recommended in the book under examination, enough is gained only for a while. Questions are still raised, and they demand an answer, if the peace which has been secured is to continue. The great outstanding question in the Atonement is how men, who were and are sinful, can stand with confidence before God or be justified. This question is not yet solved by the Incarnation, by the fact that in Christ there is an identification of the human and the Divine life, or by the Higher Life which was manifested in Him being "realised" by us. It is only imperfectly realised by us at best. We are never more than partially at one with God or Christ. Is the deficiency to be ignored? How is it to be made good, or what is to be said of it? It is no slight matter, as we find after the spring-time of faith, in days of recurring languor or gloom, when it is felt that there is a vast gulf between us and Christ. And this is not to speak of the guilt which was incurred prior to the reception of the better life, and the thought of which, if there is no relief, does so much in

practice to take away hope and to paralyse effort. Man was bound to be godly and upright all his days. Granting that he lives to God to-day, is the sin of yesterday as if it had never been?

*The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought*; London, Jas. Clarke & Co., 1900,—a series of papers by writers in Britain, the Continent of Europe, and America, including such names as those of Harnack, Sabatier, Marcus Dods, Dean Fremantle, etc., some seventeen altogether. Here there is a wealth of fresh and stimulating matter. The aim is to grasp the truth set forth in the Atonement, and to interpret it in the light of present-day thought, to put aside legal fiction and every kind of unreality, and to get at the moral and spiritual substance, and at the same time to bring out and do justice to the sufficiency and fulness of the gospel message. The views of the authors are stated briefly, and therefore, as they are prepared to admit, inadequately. Hence a summary of the contents of the volume must be quite unsatisfactory as a means of indicating their views; and even a summary is not here attempted. There is much excellent writing on such points as the lasting craving for Redemption, and the keenness of the longing in our day, while the objections which many people raise against the whole subject of Redemption as being at variance with the pronouncements of their moral sense, are also fully acknowledged; on the felt insufficiency of the earth, and all that belongs to it, and the unrest that accompanies all its gains; on the confidence that a right spirit which is at peace with God, and the prosecution of a worthy aim in life, such as Christ inculcates and assists one to fulfil,—that this, and this alone, can bring to one the sense of having plenty; on the interpretation of Christ's reconciling work, as far as may be by means of what is found in the best human lives; on the significance of our Lord's Death as completing the

goodness of His Life; and on the need of universality of thought on the Atonement, as distinct from Hebraistic or merely national thought.

Some of the writers emphasise the point that true faith in Christ makes man so hate and renounce his sin that he is on the side of good, he *is* good. He is really justified, as being just, the sinfulness of his life being abolished.—But we have to ask, as Ritschl did in such cases, What secures and preserves that peaceful, friendly relation towards God which is first necessary to encourage and enable a man to rise superior to his sin by moral endeavour? Besides, in strictness, no one is ever just, in the sense stated, in this life. Hence this theory falls to the ground. Others say that Christ died as representing men, or again, that there is a mystical union of Christ with the faithful, and so His merit passes to them, His goodness is in them, is theirs. The difficulty remains that even so they all continue to sin daily, and indeed those nearest to Christ find their unworthiness to be the greatest. Is a holy God satisfied with a partial reformation, or with repentance, that is accompanied or forthwith followed by renewed lapses?—Once more, it is pointed out that growth is the law of the world. One was specially expectant when recourse was had to the principle of development, and as a matter of fact there is much in the elucidation which is given that calls for gratitude. But cosmical development rather than that of the individual is treated. Science and history are founded on; it is maintained that evolution tells not of a fall, but of a continuous moral uprising on the part of man, the sense of sin being full of promise, as being a sign of aspiration. God is always in the world, helping man, who is essentially one with God his Father, by the world's arrangements, by discipline, and by many blessings. God also draws by inward cords of the mind, especially through the perfect Personality of Christ. The Atonement does not signify

man's dependence on a past and external transaction. The Atonement is effected as man turns to God and goodness, and as Christ imparts (not imputes) righteousness.—While there is much truth in the presentation just indicated, we must yet observe that sin separates from God, as experience proves. How is the separation to be overcome by or for the guilty? It will not do to say to the conscience that there ought to be, or there need be no separation, and that it should not be thought of. It exists, and that which causes it persists in a greater or less degree till the close of life. What precisely has to be done to bring man *with confidence* to God, and to keep him, unworthy as he is, and knows himself to be, in peace and friendship with God?

Naturally, there is a temptation to put away theories (and this course is recommended at least in one case in the volume), and to find the Atonement in Christ's life. His life, being entirely righteous and loving, was one with God's, and as men's lives are shaped in conformity with His, they are brought to the same oneness. This treatment of the subject has oftener than once been referred to, *e.g.*, in the remarks on Archdeacon Wilson's book.

Other articles in the volume give the essence of the leading historical theories, the laws of Atonement in the Old Testament, and the conditions, scriptural, historical, personal, which a theory of the Atonement has to satisfy.

## CHAPTER XII

### FAITH IN THE ATONEMENT MAY BE THE RESULT OF A PROLONGED GROWTH

THOUGH there is a peculiar difficulty in grasping the truth and reality of Divine forgiveness through the Death of Christ, there is, as we have seen, no such difficulty in progressing from the initial stage of faith in God, the position so well described by Principal Caird, to the apprehension along with that faith of a higher type of goodness as the object of aspiration, and as incumbent on oneself, and ultimately the type which appears in the Person of Christ. There is a new and disciplined sense, a growing appreciation of the moral qualities evinced by God-fearing men, till at length the nature or Personality of Christ Himself is in a measure understood, and is magnified in one's estimation. The secker for God and for righteousness adduces at each period in his approaches to God the highest goodness that has for the time been disclosed to him: it is acknowledged as the standard for himself, and as the goal of his desire and effort. The day comes, accordingly, when the nature or Personality of Christ is present to thought, and is the object of aspiration in the time of devotion. And in all this there is the same reality as in the earliest form of faith; there has been a natural, necessary, and legitimate process of growth from that first condition; there has been no abrupt transition at any point.

Here there is a marked advance, and there is the richest

promise. Christ, who was at first unknown, is apprehended in sincerity, and is recognised as one's standard and goal. There is every ground, therefore, to trust that, in the growing light, the significance and purpose of His Death will in due time be unfolded. And with good reason the expectation may be cherished that the completed faith, when it is at length attained, will be of the largest and most precious kind; indeed, no other expectation should be entertained. It is right and needful to have a faith in Christ's Cross that is truly great, that is delivered from paltriness and meagreness, such as a hasty and ill-grounded assent to the doctrine of Redemption through the Cross is apt to exhibit. And there ought to be freedom from contradictions, and from what offends the moral sense—such as the idea of an unmoral transference of Christ's goodness to the sinner. The clearness and truth which must characterise *Revelation* are justly desiderated in the case. Thus alone can there be a whole-hearted personal faith in Christ's finished work. There is the utmost hope, therefore, for him who is content in this matter as in others to learn of God and to wait. There is much to show that his spiritual prospects are the very best. But it is pre-eminently a case for waiting, seeing that the salvation which is contemplated is a great salvation, that everything about it is characterised by a glorious fulness, that we have to do with the *perfect* gift of God to the world and the individual.

All the processes and results of natural research tend to confirm one in the course which has been mentioned. The view that faith in the Atonement may be the result of a prolonged growth, and being a great and momentous issue may be expected to be formed in that manner, is supported by the facts of secular life in all its departments. In the latter sphere, all knowledge and all attainments of great value are slowly-formed products; there is

a development in each case extending over many years, with massive effects for the present and boundless promise for the future. In the domain of nature the most imposing and fruitful results are realised by this means alone. If, then, faith in the Atonement were reached in a brief period as the effect of spiritual meditation lasting only for a few minutes, hours, or days, how poor and paltry an acquisition, it seems, that faith would be in comparison with the mastery of any secular science! For though it is true that the grace or power of God assists man in his religious life, no miracle is in these days to be expected which will forthwith create faith in its fulness. Probably no person, of whatever school, claims that there is a palpable miracle in the case. But there was an old view, one which is still widely prevalent, to the effect that the faith which is so desirable and necessary is gained by passing at a bound, as it were, from the moral law, which condemns for past sin, and which it is impossible for man to satisfy, to the Cross of Christ and His cleansing blood. This faith in the efficacy of Christ's Cross might, it was supposed, come to be held more "firmly" than at first. Times of doubt were to be overcome by renewed and more resolute cleaving to the Cross; there was simply the difference between a feeble and a firm embrace. But beyond that there could be no progress in the matter. Where there could be an advance, and where there ought to be improvement all one's days, was in the work of sanctifying the life. It is now felt, however, that if this procedure were followed, the faith which is so rapidly gained must be meagre in its essence and amount, and could bear no comparison with the ample and never-ending contents which go to make up any one of the sciences. "But," it might be said, "Christ, the object of faith, is infinite in His fulness, and He is at once laid hold of; and the marvellous ways and wisdom of God in redemp-

tion are grasped. Who could say that as this is apprehended there is only a slight possession secured? Does not man there and then receive out of the divine fulness, and have the rich stores of God and Christ at his disposal as far as he needs?" A simple answer to this might be: As well say, that because the earth's store of truth and material goodness is inexhaustible, the person who would explain it once for all by some *a priori* conception—as did the earliest Greek philosophers, Thales and the rest, and many a metaphysician of later times—must obtain a sufficiency of knowledge and practical benefit of an earthly kind; or that because the heavens contain myriads of starry worlds, the person who seeks to interpret them by the means afforded by the early Ptolemaic system will be perfectly rewarded in his astronomical pursuits. For in each of these cases the object that one has turned to—the earth and the heavens—is the proper object of investigation, and in it there is boundless wealth laid up. True, there is real good to be derived by everyone who applies himself to the earthly or to the spiritual object in sincerity and as best he can; only, just as the generality of people find the antique methods of mastering nature defective and unpromising, and discard them for a better, and one, too, which allows of endless advance, so is it in the spiritual sphere. This last is infinite in its extent and value, but its treasure requires to be taken over by a method which allows us to do justice to its greatness and inestimable worth.

Furthermore, as there is a solution of the leading difficulties that emerge in the secular subjects when the finished results are read in the light of the previous evolution, we are encouraged to seek relief from the perplexities raised in connection with the Atonement, some of which have already been alluded to, by mastering the antecedent process that leads up to faith in the full for-

givenness which is obtained through Christ's death. Paulsen points out with great clearness the dilemma with which the inquirer into origins is confronted in any of the fields of nature or history, so long as the explanation which is afforded by the fact of development is overlooked.<sup>1</sup> That writer's views on Theism and Christianity cannot be accepted: he prefers Pantheism to Theism, and religion is represented as resting on mere feeling; as if the truth of religion, its claim and power to meet the legitimate demands of reason, did not concern us. But his elucidation of the sciences and of historical life, by means of the principle of evolution, appears both interesting and conclusive. The discussion proceeds on the lines which are now familiar in all dissertations on these topics; for, apart from the question of the emergence of great men in history, who are in a large measure original, and not to be accounted for by any antecedent causes, inquirers are now accustomed to study earthly phenomena in general by laying bare in each case the stages of upbuilding. In dealing with these general subjects, Paulsen has no occasion to allude to the matter of the Atonement, and does not allude to it. But as faith, too, is a growth, we have every reason to consider whether it also, in its culmination, may not be illuminated, and whether the dilemma and contradictions will not be removed by a treatment resembling that which is applied to the various branches of nature and history, and to the acquisition of fruitful knowledge regarding them.

A finished product, then, according to Paulsen, can only be understood when we ask how it came to be and when we trace the course of its formation. Passing from biology, where, as is well known, the law of Evolution was established as explaining the origin of species, he deals with the question of origins in the wide sphere of mental

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 6th Germ. ed., chap. ii., esp. sec. 5.

and historical life ; and, first, in respect to *Language*. Living speech, without which the life of a people would be impossible, is formed by a vast multiplicity of dissimilar parts which co-operate for a single end. The language of a civilised community is a highly complicated apparatus, which works with amazing exactness in expressing all possible thoughts and feelings, down to the most delicate shades,—an instrument so fine and so effective that the most elaborate machine seems but simple in comparison. How, it is asked, did such an organism originate? Chance is not to be thought of. And invention or discovery by some specially endowed individual is equally unthinkable. While people were yet speechless, had one person devised in seclusion the thousand names of things, qualities, processes, relations, and hit upon declension and conjugation, and then submitted the finished result to those about him, along with an explanation of its utility, so that they were persuaded to learn this language and apply it for their purposes? Had that been possible, it would scarcely be surprising if it were further asserted that the same person invented the understanding and by persuasion got the race to accept it. Or, did many co-operate in the invention of language, one individual contributing so many nouns, etc. etc.? Manifestly we are confronted with the dilemma, Is language the effect of chance or of deliberate invention? There appears to be no third possibility, and yet the two proposed explanations are alike unthinkable.

At this juncture the Science of Language brings relief. The dilemma was due to the supposition that languages, like the species of plants and animals on the old view, are rigid, unchangeable products, finished once for all on their first appearance in history, and passed on in that form from generation to generation. In reality, each of them is now known to be a living organism, continually changing as the life of the people changes. The present form is the fruit

of a development from a very simple, primitive beginning,—probably from reflex sounds as the elements,—a development which has gone on for thousands of years, and is itself the starting-point for new formations. The Science of Language has the great advantage that it possesses clear evidence from history and literary remains of the fact and the process of change, as, *e.g.*, in the two great groups of the Aryan and the Romance tongues. New and distinct languages and not simply dialects of the same speech are shown to be derived from a common source. How did these new species arise? It was by the gradual summation of slight variations; purposeful invention or transformation played next to no part in the case. The minds of the speakers were no doubt concerned in the modifications which resulted: there was a steady endeavour on their part to express novel thoughts and feelings with clearness and force; and the straining for emphasis of expression and the desire for ease of articulation were additional factors in the process. Mind performed its part in effecting each minute change that occurred. But there was no design on the great scale to devise a new language or to transform an existing one. The intervention of mind does not nullify the fact of growth.

Next, we may turn to another phase of practical life, to the development of *morals*, of *law*, of the *State*. The laws of conduct were not invented by moralists, any more than those of logic and grammar were thought out and prescribed by logicians and grammarians respectively. The practices of morality are a natural and necessary product of the life of men, and in so far as they are duly apprehended by the reflecting mind the conscience is formed and educated. Moral philosophy traces the rise of the laws of which it treats, explains them and shows the foundation on which they rest, but it does not create them. So with Civil Law: it is not an invention of jurists or lawgivers,

but grows with the general life of a people as the expression and embodiment of its social spirit, having been originally a phase of common obligation or custom. In course of time there is a conscious elaboration of it; there is written law in addition to that which is unwritten; in codification and in the legislative constructions of the great civilised countries, law does appear as one of the most conspicuous purposeful products of the concentrated intelligence of men. But if the matter is viewed historically, we observe that even here there is no attempt to alter the essence and principles of law. What we find at bottom is that the prevailing traditions and enactments are systematised, and that there are slight adaptations of them from time to time to the changing conditions of the people's life. Judicature and constitution alike are not an artificial creation, but a growth. Contrast with this conception the curious superposition of eighteenth century Rationalism, according to which the institution of the State was first thought out with a view to the realisation of specific purposes, and was then introduced by vote and resolution.

Even in the realm of theory, which is specially claimed by the Intellect, and where it seems that conscious purpose and invention must play a principal part, the position of matters is very much the same as before: the *Sciences* themselves are not devised and explicated in accordance with a plan, but are the result of growth. As their germ we have mythological cosmogony, the first crude sketch of a theory of the universe in which the world is represented as a unity. From this commencement arises philosophy, and then after a long interval philosophy puts out from its stem the separate sciences as branches or members. The germ of knowledge is unfolded by a kind of inner necessity. The understanding, of course, has been involved throughout the process; but no individual person concerned foresaw the complete issue or the path of develop-

ment. The individual works as it were in the dark, adopts as best he can the thought of his time and applies it in his own way to interpret reality; but he cannot tell what will come of his work, does not know how it will be articulated with the general development, or at least with the course of it in future. In this connection it may be observed that the greatest and most fruitful ideas, those which open up new paths for inquirers, are not ushered into the world as results which their authors designed or set themselves to achieve. Newton, *e.g.*, did not propose to himself to discover the law of gravitation, or Darwin the Theory of Evolution. Great ideas which are a real gain for science, unlike trivial imitations, compilations or hackwork, are formed by a species of mental conception or brooding, and as if by inspiration, not merely in consequence of an anxious craving to produce something. They appear as it were spontaneously, when the time for them has arrived. And they are like a work of art, on the fine details of which the genius and personality of the author have been impressed: the other inferior products are in comparison like uninteresting machine-work which has been struck off at a blow.

And just as the principal fruits of intelligence are the outcome, not of a definite, narrowly circumscribed aim, but of an elemental plastic energy, so the *Understanding* itself is not a work of human design, but a natural growth founded on Instinct. A similar account has to be given of the life of men and nations in *History*. A people, according to a common observation, exhibits like an individual person the periods of childhood, youth, maturity, old age: these stages are not contemplated by the nation in advance, but are unconsciously traversed. The individual, indeed, may resolve in his early years to shape his career so as to attain a particular goal which he pictures for himself, and in order that he may exert a renovating influence on the world.

But the longer he lives he sees more clearly how insignificant he is in presence of the great forces that govern history.

A survey of nature and history, then, shows in every sphere a uniform law in operation. Even in the world of mind, where ideas and conscious purposes perform their part, the dominant constructive principle is that of development from germinal elements. Purposeful action is itself regulated by the fact of growth; the latter is a fundamental characteristic of reality. So much for Paulsen's treatment of topics, of which only a sketch or paraphrase has been given. And it serves to remind us of the prevailing conception of our time, of which it is a specimen or epitome.

We pass to the matter of faith. Religion is at least as large a subject as any of those which have just been mentioned—surely larger than any. And we have Revelation opening it up to us in its vastness, just as the full truth of nature is set before the mind of the inquirer in the earthly objects scattered around him. But no miracle is to be counted on in either of the two regions to convey the truth to the man of to-day. How then is the perfect gift of religion to be appropriated by the individual soul? In every other field of interest anything that is really important and valuable can be acquired only gradually and by patient, progressive effort. We are led to expect that there will be a similar experience with regard to the gifts of faith. If they could be rapidly grasped in their entirety, we have every reason to think they would be of comparatively small moment even when secured. It has to be remembered that man in his natural, worldly condition is averse to the things of the spirit. He has accustomed himself to other interests and delights. He seeks the ends of self—riches, honour, fame; he has a keen longing for these objects, understands well the desirability of them. But, having the heart so engrossed he cares for nothing else, appreciates nothing

higher or better. It is obvious that, without forming a new habit, he knows and can know little or nothing of spiritual concerns. It is to magnify Christ and His truth when we say that such person cannot forthwith apprehend Christ's finished work on the Cross, or even Christ's earthly life to any real purpose. The whole current of his thought and desire has been different from what was found in Christ, has indeed been quite opposite. He perceives little or nothing of the true loftiness of Christ's aims in the world, of the real goodness of Christ in His life: in these things there has been, and there still is, no communion between the soul of the man and the mind of our Lord. Time and habit have formed a way of thinking in the man which only time and a contrary habit can effectually replace by a better. In such circumstances it is vain to imagine that this person can pass directly to a true apprehension of the Cross of Christ, of that endurance by which His goodness was revealed in full and His aim in Redemption was made complete. The greater power of perception, *i.e.* as respects the Cross and what it signifies, surpasses, and so presupposes and includes the less, namely, the ability to apprehend with sincere approval and sympathy the preceding *life* of Jesus.

True, the power of Christ's death, as being the consummation of His work of love for men, may in some measure be *felt* when nothing else in His previous existence on earth has been appreciated. But though the soul has such a faculty of feeling in religion, it cannot by such means realise the truth which it seeks and needs. It can give no proper account to itself or to others of its inward acts. There can at most be mere assertion, and the use of inadequate material images in describing things spiritual. We have unexplained statements to the effect that faith "cleaves firmly" to the Cross alone, and so forth. But statements without meaning do not suffice.

The progressive nature of the Revelation in Scripture itself, and all that we know of the methods of secular research in every branch of knowledge or art, dispose us to believe that he who for the first time gives his mind seriously to the attainment of a genuine personal faith must start, not with an enlightened perception of the completed gift of God to man, but with a faith which, great as its immediate effect may be, is indeed only like a grain of mustard seed. Doubtless he will at once gain much of the benefit of true religion, rich comfort and blessing for heart, mind, and life. But even better things are in store for him ; the great tree of faith is yet in waiting. Time was when no other conception of Christianity was dreamt of in the Church than that of an instant acceptance of salvation through the merits of Christ in His death. First there had to be a simple receiving of the full blessing of Christ, a simple resting upon Christ crucified ; and then, this faith being sound and sufficient, the life had to be brought into conformity with it, being gradually built up in righteousness, adorned with the several Christian graces and virtues. This conception, which is still quite familiar to us, more so indeed than any other, flourished especially in the non-historical ages of the past : it was thoroughly in harmony with the general thought of the eighteenth century, a period which was regardless of history and development. Thus it was formerly a living and acceptable creed. It was a serviceable faith, fruitful of unspeakable good in its time. It contained in its substance a very large amount of truth ; especially as it may be granted that those who owned it, while they were avowedly concerned only with the death of Jesus, held a genuine conviction, though a very imperfect and for the most part only a latent conviction, as to the nature of Him who died and as to the merit of His whole life. But the proper study of the life of Jesus belongs to the recent past—to the last two generations. The know-

ledge of it has brought a new light of goodness and truth to the minds of men, leading them to inquire anew regarding the Christian salvation, and to look for a satisfying meaning in it. This procedure, in which we ask what Christian goodness in its main element signifies, and what the nature of Jesus was as He walked this earth, before we attempt to interpret the Crucifixion, gives the hope of being able to realise the truth and greatness of the Christian Revelation. In other fields, achievements of incalculable magnitude have resulted from men's compliance with the universal law of growth, from the fact that in each instance they have traced the course of truth from its elementary starting-point to the furthest reach that was attainable for the time being. The vastness of the issues in those cases is undeniable and astounding. An important suggestion is thus offered for our guidance in what pertains to the religious life, and that suggestion is worthy of careful attention, since the Author of nature and the Ruler of history is also the Father of spirits. There has been provided for us a great salvation, and men are called upon to recognise it as such: their faith is, beyond comparison, the most momentous attainment in their experience, whether we regard its present or its enduring effect. If we enter into the matter in the progressive way which has been indicated, and which is also the way of truth, a like reward to that which has been forthcoming in the worldly sphere, though, of course, an infinitely better reward, may be anticipated.

Not only is the vastness of the products of nature and history accounted for by the fact of growth; it was also pointed out that there are dilemmas in those realms which are insoluble till the fact in question is brought forward by way of explanation, and then there is an obvious solution, not indeed for all difficulties, but at least for the

most pressing. We are thus induced to employ once more the clue that is offered, to obtain relief, as far as may be, from the perplexities or dilemmas which are presented as we reflect on the nature and ground of Forgiveness through the perfect work of Christ.

If the life of religion is begun and in progress, one may hope to advance intelligently and profitably to the acceptance of the crowning Revelation in Christ's Cross. If, on the other hand, there has been no previous life of faith, many in modern times, on reverting to the subject of the Crucifixion, will feel a rooted aversion to it. They find that the story of it is too melancholy; it is very different from the bright imaginative tale that the mind naturally turns to for restoration and comfort. But, above all, it presents an insoluble problem to the understanding. Heaven with its glory has doubtless been opened up to many in past times by the direct preaching of the Cross of Christ. But it is difficult for the cultured man, even the moderately cultured man, now to glory in a whole-hearted way in anything. It is specially difficult for him, on first turning his mind to the matter, to glory in the Cross.

The doctrine of Forgiveness through Christ's Cross is apt to appear superfluous or even harmful. There are those who want to set aside the whole conception of *Forgiveness* on the part of God, finding on apparent grounds of reason that it must be rejected as positively injurious. They consider that it breaks down the lofty sentiment of justice, that it would introduce an unworthy laxity into the Divine procedure, and that a perfect Being ought to deal fairly and equitably with mankind, weighing the merit and the iniquity both as in an even balance, and pronouncing judgment precisely as the balance inclines, and whatever the result may be. That course, and no other, it is maintained, plausibly enough,

would be perfectly righteous. So, too, it is pointed out, nature, which is God's creation, shows no mercy, but only the unbroken network and the inviolable sovereignty of law. If one keeps out of harm's way on the earth, he is safe; but the falling stone or tree spares none, not even an infant. There the mind of the Creator is plain from His works; but there is no sign of relenting forgiveness.

Professor Huxley contended that the strong ethical teaching, the pure righteousness, of the Old Testament, is morally superior to the mercy, the boundless love of God, which is the distinctive utterance of the New. There are many moralists and clear-thinking men of science who are similarly constrained to hold that, as compared with this weak, yielding love, as it appears to them to be, pure justice to all, by which everyone is dealt with according to his works, commends itself with much more effect. "Un sentiment n'est jamais un principe. *À chacun selon ses œuvres*, voilà un principe. *À chacun selon ses besoins*, voilà un sentiment." Then, too, the psychological process which is implied in this act of forgiveness can hardly be realised by such minds as a possibility. Law is quite intelligible, with the rewards and punishments, both inward and outward, which result from obedience and disobedience. But the leading factors which are presupposed in the act of forgiveness through Christ are mystical or unknown, and the interaction of them is totally wanting in the clearness which is observed in all admitted or positive reality, and possesses no cogency for thought. The supposition that in our time God somehow speaks peace to man, and that the forms of forensic justice are carried out in a spiritual Court where God and Christ—even Christ Crucified—and the individual man himself appear as leading parties or functionaries in the case,—a representation of this kind, resembling too much the mythologies

of distant ages, and having no established claim to rank among the tested realities of the present, prevents many from trying to grasp the meaning and value for themselves of the Christian salvation. The conditions and the whole process of forgiveness through Christ Crucified seem to be inconceivable and impossible for many of those who have habituated themselves to rely on sober, simple fact. God is not denied. Right is readily acknowledged as having positive and supreme significance; and the means and methods by which it maintains its claims can be clearly presented to thought. But the Christian system of forgiveness as a principle of spiritual life appears to be unreal and even unthinkable. If we try to conceive the idea, we are brought face to face with a dilemma. Either Christ's perfect goodness in death is actually communicated to man, or else man has been and still is sinful whatever his faith may be. On the former supposition, forgiveness is out of place: the man is perfect, and there is nothing to forgive; on the latter, the person who is and remains sinful cannot justly be treated *as if* he were righteous.

Theologies with their highly artificial constructions are doubtless in part responsible for the distrust which is now referred to. If Christian faith is found to cleave resolutely to the perfect good which is offered in the gospel, even though the truth with which it is made conversant is far higher than that which man's common thoughts can attain to, and just because the gift is so unspeakably great—is even Divine,—those men also are within their rights who demand realities in place of fancies, and whose whole training and success in mastering nature oblige them to withhold their trust from whatever has the appearance of being only an “idol” of the mind. Does not many a Christian believer require to take a lesson from them, and to guard against such idols; and would not one's

faith be more real and satisfying to him, as being more firmly fixed on its object and more spiritual, if he did? The prevalent Agnosticism may be taken as a summons to deal seriously with Revelation. It has been not uncommon to apply language of laudation to the Cross, which is extravagant because unmeaning. Care has to be taken that reality is not lost to the faith. What is declared to be a *Revelation* should be presented as such. The call is to exhibit the truth as knowable, rather than the utter marvel or mystery. The mystery will by no means be eliminated by recognising the truth which is ascertainable. What is clear takes us up to and makes us realise the grandeur and the mystery. So it is elsewhere, *e.g.*, in astronomy. There is no proper conception of the mystery in any region till there is a perception of the manifested truth.

We should first be able to apprehend the Divine act of forgiveness through Christ as psychologically conceivable. Then, but only then, we may go on to ask whether righteousness would be prejudiced or promoted by it, and also whether this forgiveness from God is actually true. If it is utterly inconceivable and meaningless, it is unnecessary to ask what its effects might be, or to raise any question regarding it. The subject is one to be dismissed forthwith from thought. As to its conceivability, let us first make the preliminary observation, which is quite simple, that forgiveness as realised by us, blessedness, the peace of friendship with God, the state of mind in which one turns to God with desire and pleasure,<sup>1</sup> is not more difficult to grasp as a possible mental condition than the fear and unrest which are occasioned by the neglect of one's duty towards Him. Forgiveness, mercy, or love, it is said, unwarrantably introduces feeling in religion, mere sentiment which derogates from the pure

<sup>1</sup> The fuller meaning of forgiveness will be considered later.

majesty of law and justice. But on our side at least we cannot get rid of feeling. There is either pleasurable or painful emotion, either joy or fear and unrest. The only question is, Which is it to be? And we cannot but connect the particular feeling which is experienced, whether it is joy or fear, with God and with the action of God upon the soul. Faith in Him is originally attained by means of Revelation, by a light of goodness and even ideal Perfection imparted to us in the course of life. God is believed in as an Intelligent Holy Spirit with whom we have to do (p. 99 f.). His nature is known in part; He is recognised as drawing us to all goodness. Feeling in us must be affected by the perception of this all-important truth. If we, looking to Him as the source of all goodness, still cherish evil, fear is inevitable. He appears as perfect; we are far from being what we could be and ought to be. Distress ensues as a matter of course. There is no psychological mystery there. Truth in general exerts a powerful influence on man's heart. As the most important truth of all, that relating to God and His dealings with us, is seized, sentiment must be profoundly affected. It is not strange that we should connect the trouble which has been referred to with God, or that we should find that *He* has caused it. The belief in His justice and in His interest in mankind involves that conclusion. It would be incredible that such a Being, interposing as He does in human life, should leave the heart unmoved, or that He should suffer it to be affected in the very same way, whether one's inclinations were those of the purest saint or those of the most abandoned sinner. Fear is one of the most natural products of the awakening conscience, occurring before there is faith, and arising from the thought that God may exist and may be expected to be wrathful towards those who have not been duly mindful of Him.

And even when He is supplicated, if there is still no perception of satisfaction for that righteousness which He enjoins and which we approve, there is, along with any experienced blessings, continued reason to fear. Such is the one mental condition.

Let us take next the position of the contrite believer. As he turns to God in penitence and faith, with sincere hatred of all known sin, and with an earnest desire for all needful blessing, and, in particular, for help to do well in the time to come, he has the conviction that the course he now adopts is right whatever the past may have been; that here at least is one act of his, and one juncture in his life, with which a righteous God is undoubtedly well pleased. And though he still continues to be backward in learning spiritual truth, and in doing the right even so far as he knows it and approves of it, he sees no reason on that account to abate his filial trust. The human parent, he will naturally reflect, that would cast off his child because of occasional wrongs, or because of much shortcoming which an absolute standard, or one applicable to the experienced and mature person, would bring to light, would be condemned by all right-thinking people. It would be held that he ought to train up the child to better ways; he would be reminded that, as the saying goes, he could not expect to find an old head on young shoulders. Shall the Father of all, shall He who made men thus reasonable, be Himself unreasonable, tyrannical in His treatment of His own, who are young in His service, as the God-fearing may be said to be throughout the short span of their earthly life? Shall He be moved to anger and vengeance because of their faults, when they sincerely long to be like Him in holiness? On the contrary, there is the firm and well-grounded trust that He who is so highly exalted in all respects is infinitely more compassionate, far-seeing, generous, and patient than any man. He corrects His children in

love, not in anger; He is ever willing to be pleased. Oftener than He visits them with pain He blesses them with peace, joy, and the large hopes known to everyone of spiritual mind, because His people serve Him acceptably.<sup>1</sup> Thus the state of trusting God is as conceivable as the state of distrusting Him; and the trust appears natural and reasonable, even when it is remembered how frail and wayward men are. There can be pleasure as well as pain in directing one's thoughts to Him, rest as well as unrest, hope and confidence as well as fear and misgiving.

Next, is the situation necessarily made unreal and wholly mystical when we proceed to bring Christ into it? That will depend on whether the Person of Christ is a reality to one or not. If He is regarded as a vague inexplicable figure, fading away in the obscurity of the distant past, or as all but mythological, then it may well be found that there is only the hollowness of fiction in any process in which He is supposed to be involved. It is otherwise when He is taken to be a historical Personality who completes the Revelation of God to man. He now manifests perfect human goodness, and men find that they must take account of such goodness if they will obtain full forgiveness from God. While a perfect Revelation from the Most High must, in its fulness, baffle the comprehension of beings so imperfect as we are, the very fact that there is a *Revelation* in Christ, the simple meaning of that word,

<sup>1</sup> So in the hymn by Paul Gerhardt:

“ Wie ein Vater seinem Kinde  
 Sein Herz niemals ganz entzeucht,  
 Ob es gleich bisweilen Sünde  
 Thut und aus der Bahn entweicht,  
 Also hält auch mein Verbrechen  
 Mir mein frommer Gott zu gut,  
 Will mein Fehlen mit der Ruth  
 Und nicht mit dem Schwerte rächen.  
 Alles Ding währt seine Zeit,  
 Gottes Lieb in Ewigkeit.”

teaches us to look for reality, and for the clearness of reality in it and its results. However high the Revelation reaches, we must be able to feel our way up towards the heights, and must have the assurance that in our ascending course we are not at any point giving credence to fables or fancies. We have already seen how means may be employed to make the Person of Christ a reality to the individual who returns to God (p. 134 ff.). He acquires a new sense for goodness, and aspires to it in the purest forms in which it presents itself to the mind. The most exemplary Christian men are accepted by him as means for supplying him with a standard for thought and action. These men, having the mind of Christ, are historical and well known. Habitual esteem for them leads him to appreciate the Personality of Christ, and this last then becomes, and continues to be, the supreme standard. Christ has come to be understood; and, as has often been pointed out, the existence of Christendom demands such a founder as its real, historical cause.

The righteousness of Christ in its quality and constancy satisfies every requirement of our moral sense; and, as appearing in a truly human life, it furnishes a perfect standard for all men. When, then, this standard, taken from history, is acknowledged by the man of faith as that to which he too ought to have conformed, when it is honoured by him in sincerity and truth, and when he aspires with the help of God to reach it, nothing has been admitted to his thought which is dubious or unwarranted. When he lifts up his heart to God, it will surely be drawn at the same time to the loftiest excellence that has been disclosed to it in human form. What alternative is there? Should he presume to hold converse all his days with the Supreme Being, while framing conceptions of righteousness, and desires for righteousness, which never rise above a low, arbitrary standard, or which fall distinctly short of the best, namely,

the goodness of Jesus? That course of procedure would be manifestly unjustifiable, since, as we must hold, God is a God of entire holiness. Accordingly we are led to the issue, which is inevitable, but by no means vaguely mystical, that we must seek forgiveness of God through Christ, or while adducing the spotless righteousness of Christ as the rule by which we measure ourselves, and as the goal of aspiration. Furthermore, the death of Christ is the fitting completion of His life. His worth now mounts up to the utmost perfection that is attainable by man, being disclosed by faithful endurance of the severest trial. The fuller significance of Christ's nature is set before us in His Death. The same principle that requires us to draw near to God with the soul filled with reverence for the moral and spiritual excellence of Jesus Christ, induces us to concentrate our minds on its finished and most adorable form as seen in His Cross. The central event in history, which was witnessed on Calvary, shows us in full what we are before God and what we ought to be, shows the faithfulness, love, and obedience to which we ourselves should aspire. The summit of possible human attainment was there reached. Again, therefore, since we can only supplicate God with effect when we judge ourselves in the light of the purest goodness we can discern, and when we sincerely long for that quality in ourselves, we can understand how we should be required to gauge our sins and shortcomings, and frame our soul's desires, by taking the full virtue of Christ's death as the measure to be applied, and how, too, this should be the enduring way of access to God, never to be superseded by a worthier, since a nature that would excel that of Jesus, a spirit superior to one that fulfilled all righteousness in life, and was shown by death to be invincible in its love, is not to be imagined, cannot be thought of as possible. The idea of forgiveness through Christ Crucified is, then, conceivable by the man of to-day, who is trained by

scientific pursuits to sobriety and precision of thought. It conflicts with none of the current analogies by which he is guided ; it is an extension to perfection of the common idea of righteousness, viewed in its relation to God and man. It is grasped by the mind that turns to God and to goodness, and that goes on by a process of development to learn what true goodness for it means.

We are thus led to the further consideration that the apparent difficulty or dilemma in the Atonement on the score of righteousness (p. 216) is lightened, if not removed, when we have regard to the process by which faith in the Atonement is reached, and to the moral improvement resulting from that faith. Those who are truly penitent will be forgiven and helped by One who is righteous, when they begin to follow the light that is in them, even though this light falls short of that which is to be obtained from Christ. One who is All-good will not be simply merciless to such as these. They are taken to favour though ignorant of Christ, and though their faith and life are not yet what they ought to be. They are yielding to the truth as they see it, and in so far they are doing all that is possible for the time. But they are capable and are desirous of being trained to perceive and to comply with the entire will of God relating to their spiritual life. If they go on in practice to respect the truth and the right, in proportion as it is unfolded to them up to its fulness in the Cross of Christ, and to have the heart's love fixed on what is revealed, the mercy and blessing which was extended to them on the first sign of repentance will for a like reason be continued and increased to perfection. Even man shows mercy on occasion given, and when the right and reasonable conditions are fulfilled ; we expect him in such case to forgive and to be patient. He will endeavour to persuade the offender, who gives but a slight indication of a better mind, to go on to acknowledge and

accept the right in full. Now, we gain our truest and best conception of God from the greatest of His works, from the mind of man, not (p. 215) from the soulless earth. As man is merciful, so is God. God, according to the Christian faith, is, of course, infinitely more merciful, more patient, long-suffering, and forbearing than any man. He blesses men on the first sign of their return, yet He seeks to bring them to the full knowledge of the truth, so that He may impart to them the whole wealth of His approving love and the blessing of an increasingly righteous nature in themselves.

The interests of true morality in the world do not suffer in consequence of God's forgiveness of man, but, on the contrary, are greatly furthered. There is more righteousness in the world as the effect of God's forgiveness than there would otherwise be. There are God-fearing or religious persons raised up in consequence of His pardoning grace, people whose main duty and pleasure is to walk with Christ in the way of all righteousness. God, who loves holiness in His people, forgives in order to increase the amount of that holiness, forgives in order that He may be feared. The gospel of peace with God through His Son gives new life and hope, and strength and encouragement for every kind of righteous action, to the person who had otherwise been without God and without hope, afflicted and rendered comparatively powerless for good by a load of iniquities that no known means could remove. This forgiveness has been the refuge and stay of the best people throughout Christendom. He who has been forgiven gains the sense of beginning to conquer in the battle of life. His whole power is set free for action or endurance.

The unforgiven, being often oppressed with fear, want, misgiving, and the haunting conviction of wrong done, disliking the thought of God, but finding themselves unable

to extinguish it, are not in a state to do their part in the world to the best purpose. In their case the contemplation of ideal goodness is naturally disquieting and dispiriting; enthusiasm is damped; there is a paralysis of the highest powers. When forgiven they are as new men, rising above their evil past, and delighting to do the Divine will in all that concerns them. If these persons who could yet attain to so great things were to be treated by the Almighty to bare and even-handed justice only, to justice without mercy; if they were to be condemned as they condemn themselves, and either destroyed because of their iniquities, or left to their hopelessness and unrest, with their principal faculties lamed, inactive, and fruitless, that would be a strange way of adding to existing righteousness! Though people are all more or less wicked, even if they are grievously wicked, a perfectly wise and good Being who arranged that they should exist in the world will surely be able to devise means for making, at least, a portion of them better. His intention with them must have been good, and He must have known that He could and would carry it into effect. The Creator was not merely experimenting in a tentative manner, did not usher in a work that was fit only to be abolished. His design in the creation of man would, however, have turned out an utter and most painful failure if formal justice alone was to be applied to the human race. We look for the greatest righteousness as well as wisdom in Him who is to be worshipped as God; and we see it when He forgives the sinful, as they repent in the light of the goodness they know; when, further, He fully forgives them as they go on to repent in the light of perfect goodness, and have faith in that goodness, in Christ; and when He trains them to serve Him, and by their growing righteousness to advance their own and others' well-being, and to glorify God on earth and for ever. In the case of those who

are forgiven, sin is weakened and is seldom victorious ; "habit overcomes habit." Thereafter temptation remains, but it is successfully resisted. At length there is not even temptation, but the peace of finished strife :

"I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,  
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire ;  
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at last,  
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher."<sup>1</sup>

Righteousness is esteemed by the dwellers in all civilised lands, by all people of sound judgment whose opinion is of any value, by men of all ranks and all degrees of intelligence, and amid all differences of opinion on other matters. And nothing gives such an impulse to the promotion of righteousness as the sense of peace and friendship with God and of His presence with one for good. All, therefore, who love their kind and who share the best conviction of the combined races of civilisation should be disposed, in the name of man's highest thoughts and aspirations, to welcome God's gospel of free and full forgiveness through Christ. The author of *Ecce Homo*, at the close of chapter xiv., writes as follows, and we may apply what he says in the present connection : "Compare the ancient with the modern world ; 'Look on this picture and on that.' One broad distinction in the characters of men forces itself into prominence. Among all the men of the ancient heathen world, there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who, besides being virtuous in their actions, were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and, besides abstaining from vice, regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson : "By an' Evolutionist."

Christian countries this higher-toned goodness, which we call holiness, has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? or can Christianity die?"

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ATONEMENT INTERPRETED THROUGH WHAT WE KNOW OF THE FORGIVENESS OF MAN BY HIS FELLOW-MAN

THE Atonement is designed for the whole world of mankind; and accordingly, in one essential aspect, it is characterised by great simplicity. If we have once got a meaning for God's forgiveness as clear and positive as for the familiar conception of law and justice, and when we have surmounted the first obvious difficulty, that righteousness appears to be prejudiced by the introduction of Divine mercy towards the sinful, we may well find that the Atonement in its main essence becomes simple to faith, and that much of the truth which it presents is readily grasped and recognised as well grounded. No long process of reasoning has to be recalled on the occasion of each approach to God; faith learns to wing its flight to Him easily and rapidly. First, the *life of religion* is understood to be begun before the Atonement is touched; the truth of religion is admitted; God is sought with sincere desire. It is implied in this that sin is acknowledged and repented of, and that the holiness which reveals it is honoured and pursued in practice, whatever failures may be incurred. Further, in continuing to commune with the perfect Deity, one becomes clearly aware that no fragmentary, arbitrary standard of ours for determining sin and holiness will suffice. We must go on to ask what is the

supreme and eternal rule of righteousness for us and for all men. This is at length recognised in Christ's goodness, and ultimately in the complete manifestation of it in His death. We ought to be as Christ was, free from sin in heart and life, righteous even to death. This highest righteousness in turn is honoured, loved, and sought: so it must be if we are to continue to come before God with a pure conscience and to derive lasting benefit from faith. Because Christ, and He alone, when He was on earth was altogether good as we should have been, we must become accustomed to think of Him with penitence and faith as we hold converse with God and seek God's friendship and help; we must in the end bow before the Cross of Christ as completing the manifestation of holiness and love which was made in His life. This practical issue in the religious life, this approach to God through Christ and the Cross, occurs not as the result of hard and complicated reasoning, but in quite a simple manner, as the honest and contrite heart meditates on God, and has regard to what is incumbent on man in the world.

This fact of simplicity has to be emphasised. Reality and simplicity are invaluable characteristics of Christian faith. The truth that concerns us most intimately can be apprehended as such, as living fact; while yet, even in its higher reach, it lies open and free for acceptance by every mind. No obstacle bars the way at the outset, even though one's endowments are only of the most ordinary kind. Then, as one lives in that light of Christ which has been admitted into his existence, he is in the best position for grasping fresh truth connected with the Christian Revelation; the spiritual realities are further illuminated and appreciated; faithful practice in the world furnishes the best opportunity for extending this higher knowledge.

For, again, in the gospel age there is no limit to the religious truth which is attainable. As a matter of course,

the principal fact of Revelation, exhibited in the Atonement, gives scope for endless intellectual reflection. The truth in regard to that fact is not only exceedingly simple, but also exceedingly profound. We turn now to the latter aspect of it. Serious questions are still raised by the intellect; and one's vital interest in the subject draws one on to seek an answer to them. These answers should serve to increase the sum of one's religious knowledge. Besides, an unsatisfied intellect means in the long run a halting, doubting spirit, a divided mind.

The fact, then, that the death of one who was entirely innocent is set forth as an indispensable condition of God's full forgiveness of sinful man, continues ever and anon to strike one with surprise. And when it is said that those who have been already restored to God's favour and friendship need to apprehend the Revelation in Christ's Cross in order to be entirely forgiven, this seems to represent the Atonement as being made for those who do not require it: at all events, if men can be brought back to God so as to live with Him in love, before they have realised the significance and need for themselves of Christ's Crucifixion, there seems to be insufficient cause for the unutterable tragedy of the death of the spotless Son of God. Besides, if it is said that the Death of Christ leads to *full* repentance and *perfect* trust on man's part, as being itself a Revelation of infinite love, this also needs explanation. One does not expect a friend who is walking with him beside a river to leap into the torrent and perish, in order to prove his love; one "fails to perceive his sanity, and can only lament his useless act" (Dr. Dods, *The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought: A Theological Symposium*, p. 180). And, again, can there be at the commencement of the religious life forgiveness which is only partial,—true, real forgiveness from God which is not full or whole-hearted? Is this gift of God temporarily meagre, the gift which He

is represented in Christian thought as waiting and yearning to confer in ample measure on one who returns, even when the latter is "yet a great way off," and the acceptance of which by man causes peculiar joy in heaven? Or what is the difference between forgiveness and full forgiveness, between the initial and the perfected blessing? What, again, is the truth in reference to substitution? These are specimens of the questions which still fall to be considered.

Now, in the endeavour to perceive how God's forgiveness of men through the perfect work and endurance of Christ is reasonable and credible, much help is obtained when we interpret the Divine act through what we know of the nature and terms of the forgiveness of man by his fellow-man. As in other spheres, we rise here from the known to the unknown. In the case we are concerned with, we advance from what is comparatively simple and intelligible to everyone to what is high as heaven. The righteous and merciful man is guided by principles which in their essence are a reproduction of those which the Deity applies; the former accordingly afford us the greatest assistance in the attempt to appreciate the latter. To this it might be objected that it is rather God's forgiveness that is explanatory, as being first in the order of time and causality; that the duty of forgiving has been impressed on Christendom, or that the practice as incumbent on men has been carried out by them, or at all events approved, to the extent that is now actual, in consequence of the Revelation of God's mercy to men in the New Testament: compare, *e.g.*, the severity shown by the heathen Greeks and Romans to their enemies. This is true: the better human practice does rest on the Divine act as its motive or cause; the former is accounted for, is explained historically by the latter. But the fact remains that, owing to the comparative simplicity of the circumstances, we actually understand

man's forgiveness of his brethren, while we are only trying to get a reason for our faith in God's mercy to man. We rise from our clear acquaintance with what is customary on the earth to a more intelligent recognition of what is to be found in God, and is at first too high for the apprehension which is desired. Then the higher knowledge when it is gained reacts on our conception and practice of the duty as resting on ourselves, and tends to purify them. Or the Divine act is explained, in the sense of being in part at least understood, through the human. In saying that God forgives, we use the word and the idea in the same sense as when we speak of men forgiving: there is a misuse of language and a confusion of thought, or an unfounded Agnosticism, if we do otherwise. Only it must be admitted that the act of forgiveness appears at its best in the higher religious sphere; the principles receive there, in God's bestowal of forgiveness, a fulfilment which as far surpasses anything that is found among men as the heavens are higher than the earth. We do not measure the mind of God by the mind of man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Flint, *Agnosticism*, p. 542 f., says: "If righteousness and love mean something wholly different in kind in God from what is meant by them in man, they may be as like our wickedness and hate as our righteousness and love; in fact, it must be impossible for us to say what they are either like or unlike. Besides, if righteousness and love, or any of God's attributes which we profess to know, are thus unlike in kind to any righteousness and love of which we have experience, how do we know the so-called Divine righteousness and love? Only, one would think, from the righteousness and love of which we have experience. Yet how can they be connected with a righteousness and love wholly different from them in kind? No inference will connect them. Any argument which can be formed to link them together must be a fallacy—a syllogism of four terms. The view, then, with which I have been dealing" (that of the late Professor A. Sabatier on the distinction between religious and scientific knowledge) "seems to be at once thoroughly agnostic and thoroughly erroneous. It implies that all knowledge of God is unreal, and all thoughts of Him meaningless. Were it true, there could be no rational and moral communion between God and man."

The following statement by the late Professor A. B. Davidson seems interesting as throwing light indirectly on the question of the relation of

What, then, is the nature of the process of forgiveness in the human case—which is the more familiar or intelligible? The principles which here come to light will be the same as those which are exemplified in full in God's extension of mercy to His people. Indeed, if we were to introduce wholly unintelligible elements into the Divine act, the question would at once arise whether we could speak of *forgiveness* in the latter case at all. The act, in some at least of its essential features, would not be connected with anything that we know of as forgiveness. No doubt the circumstances in the two cases, the earthly and the heavenly, differ very widely—the difference can hardly be overestimated. The relation of the creature to the Creator is unique; and therefore in God's dealings with transgressors a unique application of the principles is requisite. But if God's forgiveness is to be a reality to us, the principles themselves will remain those which we know. The Gospels in various parts, as in the Lord's Prayer, invite us to apprehend the pardon which

forgiveness as practised by man to forgiveness as exercised by God: "A 'double sense' of Old Testament passages has been much spoken of, and there is no objection to the phrase or the idea, provided there be a rational connection between the two senses. There may in that case be not only a double sense, but a manifold sense. Bengel laid down the principle that there was in many passages a sense meant by Divine intention for the contemporaries of the prophet or writer, and bearing on things then present; but the same Divine intention, looking farther forward *sic formavit orationem* that it (the language) more suited the times of the Messiah. The objectionable thing in this idea, which has been numberless times repeated, was that it operated with the mere language of the Old Testament and not with its ideas. The prophets did not 'use language' or 'write words,' as is often said; they expressed ideas in suitable words. And the same words can never express two senses. No passage can have more than one sense, but this one sense may receive a wider application, or a more complete verification, or a more perfect fulfilment; in particular, the sense being a religious or spiritual idea, all that was particular or relative about its first expression may be stripped off, and it may be used in a general or absolute manner. At any rate, we must not operate with O.T. *words*, supposed capable of bearing more than one sense, but with O.T. *ideas*, which are susceptible of various applications."—*Critical Review*, Jan. 1897, p. 69.

God grants through that which man offers to his fellow-creature.

Now, it has to be noticed that in every instance where man pardons, and ought to pardon, an offence committed against him by his fellow-man, there is just such a combination of justice and mercy as that which we find the Bible constantly attributing to God. He who will forgive must first make plain what law has to say on the point in question. He who is conscious that he has been forgiven, must have been convinced that law and equity are against him. If justice were entirely overlooked, if law were non-existent or obscure, it would be vain to speak of forgiveness. Either the law must be so plain as to be indisputable, or if there is any question how it would pronounce, all doubt on that matter must be removed before it can be known which party is in a position to forgive and which has to be forgiven, and also whether mercy on the one hand and gratitude on the other will be great or small. Law shows who is in the wrong; and only after this is known can we properly speak of forgiveness. In a savage land, where law was unknown, forgiveness would be impossible and meaningless. Forgiveness implies an offence, and that again presupposes the knowledge of a well-defined rule of right. Mercy springs from law, and betokens strength. "'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown." Again, to forgive the evildoer without first pointing out the wrong to him and getting him to acknowledge it and sincerely to turn from it, would be to injure him rather than benefit him. It would be to countenance his error, to encourage him in sin, and, in fact, to share in it. But as soon as the offence is confessed and renounced, he is to be forgiven; and however often he sins and repents, he is to be pardoned. It is not the number of lapses,—a disciple of Jesus suggested seven occasions as the limit of toleration,—but the sincerity of

the repentance that should be determinative. In no case should one turn a deaf ear to an earnest appeal for mercy when the fault is confessed, and when there is any sign, however small, of amendment; as will appear more clearly when man comes to ask how it would be with himself if God were to extend forgiveness only for seven offences, or, indeed, for any limited number of them. Justice and right, however, are asserted and vindicated by true forgiveness. Jesus declares this plainly when He says, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Where law and justice are not known, or, being known, are persistently set at naught, there is not even an opportunity for forgiveness. What we are required to do in the case of one who is ignorant or in the case of one who remains impenitent, is to refrain from cherishing malice or hatred towards him, for such a feeling is born of Hades; to desire and pray for his restoration to a better mind, and to use means as opportunity is offered which are calculated to influence him in this direction. We must hate none, not even our greatest enemy; we must hate sin alone. If the wrong-doer cannot be reclaimed, he must not be injured. "Love your enemies," says Christ. This does not mean that man is to give his enemy to understand that he is perfectly satisfied with him, and with all that he is doing and intending. That would be to show him no kindness; it would be to confirm him in evil. Christ's words would rather mean that, whenever there is an opportunity of making him see the error of his ways, the truest mercy as well as the fullest justice will induce one

to seize it. There may even be a prosecution at law which is consistent with love, and is called for by the duty to self, to others, or to society. In other cases, the course adopted will be that which Christ approved when He said, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Does the duty of loving one's enemy become very easy, one which men would be delighted to undertake, if it consists in going and pointing out his error to him, and "talking down to him"? If this is supposed, we must observe that there are two ways of proceeding to discharge the duty. The one is Christian but difficult. The other is perhaps common, but it is emphatically unchristian. To address an enemy in a way which cannot but repel him and confirm him in his evil courses, is human, but not Christian. To win him over by manifest integrity in declaring and upholding the right, by forbearance and by kindness, by timely fitting speech and by timely silence—the thoughtful, nameless, delicate arts of love and goodwill—and so to bring him to a sense of his misdeeds,—this is a mark of the purest and loftiest virtue, is one of the fairest fruits that Christianity has to show.

Thus the transgressor must be led to confess his fault and turn from it; and no sooner has this been effected than he is to be forgiven from the heart. True repentance alone is required as a condition. Even though the evil done in the past cannot be entirely made good, mercy will be extended as soon as repentance and reformation of conduct are observable,—such reformation as shows the repentance to be sincere. Forgiveness means that something is remitted. There would be nothing to remit or forgive, if there were complete reparation for the wrong that had been inflicted, if all material losses could be restored, and if all wounded feelings were satisfied and all painful memories blotted out. If the position were supposed to be made once more the same in all respects as if no

injury had been occasioned,—though this is impossible,—there could be no place for mercy or pardon. But Christ teaches that pardon should be granted though the past cannot be repaired, provided only there is true repentance. The servant in the parable is condemned for not having compassion on his fellow-servant when the latter could *not* pay what he owed. And still further, to take an illustrative instance, which is important for our present purpose, when the transgressor is a hapless waif who does not know the full extent of his degradation, or realise the loftiness of the standard to which the merciful man would lift him up, he will, when he is penitent for the evil he knows, when he begins to show some scintilla of better feeling and to reform in some degree, be patiently dealt with, he will be befriended and taught how to rise to higher things. He is thus *forgiven*, that is, he is taken into favour and assisted in every way that offers, though he continues to a great extent to be at fault, and is therefore only partially penitent and partially correct in action. He is *fully forgiven*—that is, he is charged with no wrong, but receives unqualified approbation and every mark of love—only at a later time, namely, when he has been trained to recognise and sincerely to regret the *whole* of his shortcoming, and to pursue and delight in the good alone.

God is love; and God loved the world with a righteous love. He did not need to be reconciled to men: He took the initiative in making gracious approaches to them, desiring as He did to live in spiritual, holy converse with them as His children. As unspiritual and unrighteous beings in their natural state, they could have no true fellowship with Him, as there can be no fellowship between truth and falsehood or between light and darkness. The Creator sought to draw His creatures to communion with

Himself and to the greatest righteousness, to righteousness like His own, for His own glory and joy and to secure their highest well-being. Hence He began by revealing Himself and His righteous law. Considering its purpose, the law, as made known in advancing measure in nature or conscience, in the Old Testament, and in Christ, is itself a manifestation of love. At each stage or period of the world's history, God was pleased with those who followed the light they had. But the gracious purpose was carried out to its final issue, both by the Revelation of perfect righteousness and by the communication of Divine forgiveness to the penitent and trustful: only by such forgiveness could men be restored to the closest union with God and to true blessedness, and only thus could the greatest righteousness be attained by them (p. 224). In Christ, as He set up the Kingdom of God on earth, the truest righteousness and mercy are seen in combination. His whole nature breathes moral purity, and He enjoins like holiness on men. But He who manifests the holiness of God in human form and is the brightness of God's glory, is gracious and helpful to sinners who repent, and convinces us of the eternal mercy of God to such as these. It is life eternal, the best blessing from God to man, to know Him in His twofold character. The law is set forth by Jesus with uncompromising strictness. It is spiritualised in the Sermon on the Mount, and made to extend to the inmost heart as well as to the outward actions. God is revealed in His highest attributes; and men have not only to obey Him as Ruler, but to love Him as Father. A new commandment is given them, that they should love one another. The law, the standard for them in all things, is the pure spirit and character of Christ Himself. There is a Christian way as regards life in general—in what people have to think and say and do and bear; and in that way it is for them

henceforth to walk. This perfect type of righteousness is set before mankind in a manner which is calculated to win their assent and devotion. Jesus went about doing good and speaking the truth in love, so that even the sinners were drawn to Him. Christ was full of grace and truth. He is fitly compared in the Gospels to some of the most attractive objects in nature—to the sunlight, to clear running water, etc. In ordaining in His Providence that Christ should live on the earth, in presenting before men the very highest goodness in Christ for their acceptance, God adopted a course which corresponds to the gracious approach or initiative of the truly merciful man in relation to the degraded person whom he wishes to reform. That is, the right—in this case the perfect will of God for man—is plainly made known, yet in a manner fitted not to repel but to gain the better feelings of man's heart.

And the Revelation in Christ's life is continued and completed in His death. His worth, His goodness and love, are completely brought to view by the extreme trial at the last. In revealing the righteousness of God He encountered the deadly antagonism of the Pharisees; yet, knowing the risk and the issue, He carried out the work to the end. One cannot do more than die for the right. But had the Crucifixion not occurred, it could have been said, whatever the excellence and glory of the life had been, that the test of extreme trial might not have been successfully endured. Without the Crucifixion, the summit of possible human attainment on earth would not have been reached, and would never have been known to mankind. There would always have remained the unsolved and insoluble question how much flesh and blood and spirit could bear. As it was, the Revelation of goodness was made perfect when our Lord endured as He did to the uttermost. And, again, the endurance, as

shown by the manifestations of love to men, was very specially of the kind that touches and subdues. At the same time, the goodness in death was of a piece with the goodness in the foregoing life, the victorious end harmonising with the beginning and the whole intervening course. The final suffering of the Cross, the blood and toil, was not a mysterious sacrifice isolated from what went before, and appointed by God for His own satisfaction. As there is apt to be obscurity of thought on this matter, a simple truth which may often have been noticed should be here emphasised, the truth, namely, that there is no distinctive pain in death. All pain is pain in life; death means the cessation of pain. Frequently, of course, there are severe pains immediately preceding death and associated with it, and hence in a vague way people think and speak of the pain of death; and, as a rule, there is no harm or mistake in so doing. But there are agonising pains that are not mortal, and there are deaths that are painless. In any case, the pain that is borne at any stage, even the last, is the pain of one who still lives. Our Lord's final suffering, especially the unutterable trial of His apparent abandonment by God, a mental result which the intensest physical pain is capable of effecting for a while, was by far the severest He had to undergo; yet it is not disconnected from what He had previously experienced as totally different. We have not to think of it apart, as something which requires a special faculty in us, or a miracle of grace, for its apprehension. God did not have peculiar pleasure in the blood of His Son who was innocent. But God specially loved the will that was found at the last to be wholly devoted and obedient. And to us complete righteousness is revealed thus and thus only—by that will of Christ which the closing trial showed to be inflexibly bent on the fulfilment of His work for the

world, showed to be entirely invincible in its holiness and love.

If this essential connection between the earlier life of Jesus and His suffering on the Cross is realised and borne in mind, we are not met by the difficulty which is often experienced when we seek to understand how the death of the Cross opens up a way for the full forgiveness of man by his Maker. The faithful must find that they require to acknowledge and honour God's law of goodness; and in the end they must honour goodness as it is seen by them in perfection. A fragment, or a part however great, cannot suffice. There could not be any part of the Divine will with man to which we might at our pleasure always remain indifferent. Now perfect goodness as attainable by man is seen only in the final passion of Christ.

Filial worship of God, and the sense for goodness as we find that it ought to be exemplified in us, together with the sincere desire for such goodness, love for Him who embodied it, and the faithful pursuit of it to the best of one's power,—these are the great but simple and reasonable requirements which man must satisfy if he would obtain the blessing of forgiveness. At first he may have no appreciation of the significance of Christ's death for him or for the world; to his mind that subject is as yet wrapped in mystery. The usual difficulties relating to substitution, etc., seem insurmountable. But if he goes as a penitent before his Father and desires restoration, his request is granted. This assurance of the gospel is borne out and corroborated by the best that we know in man: forgiveness and all needful help are extended, both in the human case and in the Divine, when the offender begins to manifest a right spirit, and however slight his knowledge of right and wrong may be. He is thereafter trained up in knowledge and in virtue. The person who begins and continues to live in faith toward God gains a growing sense

for goodness as it is illustrated by the best men around him and in history, and sees and approves more and more the purity and mercy of Christ's life, the standard for him and for all men there made manifest. And always as he approaches God it is the highest that he has come to know that he will take as the rule for himself: it could never in right or reason be less. The standard of life advances for him in the process of his spiritual training from the *goodness* of Christ to His *Personality* which sums it all up; in other words, the man of faith is led to draw near to God through Christ. Knowing Christ in this saving, effectual manner, he cannot long remain uninfluenced by the qualities evinced in our Lord's death, inasmuch as all that he adores in Jesus appears there in perfection. He sees there, and there alone, the full will of God with himself, namely, that he should cleave to his faith in God, and to the purest righteousness such as was in Christ, in face of all adverse powers, and on to the very end. He sees likewise the goal of earthly aspiration for man—a love for God and for what is Godlike and true which nothing, not even death, can vanquish. If the sin which is set forth by this absolute standard is acknowledged before God, and if this absolute goodness is loved and sought in sincerity for oneself, there is full forgiveness from God. And we may well trust the reality of that forgiveness, for the conditions mentioned ought to be fulfilled by man, as his own enlightened conscience testifies; but more could not be yielded by any one on earth. The change of mind in such person must be well-pleasing even to a Being who is perfect, so much so that the transgressions of the past are no longer laid to his charge, and he is visited with abundance of peace, and obtains the richest blessings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is when we press the necessary question, Where is the *full* Revelation of God, of His nature of goodness, and of His will with men, to be seen? or, On what condition is complete forgiveness to be

Suppose it is said that even yet, whatever confession of sin may be made, whatever love for righteousness may

obtained? where is the absolute standard of righteousness, the acknowledgment of which leads to true and full repentance?—it is then that we are obliged to take account of the Death of Jesus Christ. Otherwise the bright Galilean springtime of His ministry is preferred by us to its tragic issue—the commencement in which heaven had manifestly come to earth; when a great, gladdening, soul-satisfying Light had appeared, and those who received it rejoiced in the experienced blessing of reconciliation to God.

In any case, the goodness of the Life of Jesus must first have due recognition accorded to it, else the Death is meaningless, and trust in the Cross is of the nature of a mere *opus operatum*. And frequently, when the Cross is not present to thought, the choice of such goodness alone, as one draws near to God, the love of it, and the renunciation of all that is opposed to it, is the means of securing for one the rich gifts of heaven: one has the happy experience of the writer of the 23rd Psalm. But again goodness is tested, measured, and at length perfected by hard endurance. When all is sunshine, there is no scope for manifesting the highest goodness, and no possibility of doing so: the Cross reveals it.

While the Revelation in Christ was for many centuries practically restricted in the view of the Church to its consummation in our Lord's Death on the Cross, to the perfect sacrifice there offered for sin, there is now a tendency, resulting from the recent investigations of the life of Jesus, and from the difficulties connected with the doctrine of the Atonement, to put the Death of our Lord in the background of thought. It has already been observed that frequently the Incarnation has now the place of pre-eminence assigned to it which was long held by the Atonement. Professor Wernle goes so far as to represent the Redemption which Christ accomplished as having been effected through the Revelation in His active, earthly life, in which He imparted to His disciples joy, comfort, courage, independence, and the certainty of victory, and pronounced the forgiveness of sins without any reference to expiation wrought by Himself. It is pointed out that in the first three Gospels there is no language relating to Justification, the Atonement, etc., and yet that it is obvious to every reader that the people who surrounded Jesus were restored to an altogether peculiar life of blessedness (*Beginnings of our Religion*, Germ. ed., 1901, p. 58 ff.). What is said of Christ's Death by this author is almost entirely negative; it *could not destroy* the previously formed impression that Redemption had come through Him. He can hardly find language too strong to condemn the theology that grew up in course of time, the transition to which was originated by St. Paul, the theology that placed the emphasis on the Death of Christ, and kept before men's minds chiefly the ideas of sin and blood (pp. 167, 256, 345, and esp. 399 and 407-408). The *Blut* is classed among *Scheinobjekte*, *Scheindinge*, and is contrasted with the

be cherished, and whatever attempts to practise new obedience may be put forth, these feelings and this perform-

Person of Jesus, the latter alone being regarded as the means of procuring for man converse with the living God and with the things of eternity.

It seems strange that one who possesses a wealth of fresh historical knowledge, and gives proof of rare literary skill in treating the history of early Christianity, should fail to see that during the earthly life of Jesus the disciples were to a great extent sense-bound in their ideas, and did not yet know the full Redemption that was in waiting, and that it was only afterwards that they became new men, freed from their earthliness and filled with the Spirit, namely, as the result of the Revelation in Christ's Death and Resurrection. We feel that it is to do violence to the history to conclude otherwise. Then, too, there is no true contrast between Christ's Person and His Death. The *goodness* evinced in the Life is manifested in perfection in the Passion.

Compare with the view just examined the Sonnet by Mr. Wm. Watson, entitled *Ecce Homo*, ending as follows:—

"What is to me this show of wounds and death?  
To me His death is nought, His life is all !  
The one no word of hourly purport saith ;  
The other, at morn and noon and evenfall,  
Rallies me to Him with a trumpet's call—  
Him, not of Calvary, but of Nazareth."

—*Poems*, vol. ii. 1905, p. 31.

The Sacrament of the Supper is treated by Wernle like the *Blut* (see the pp. already referred to). Here may be fitting occasion to say that, while we reject the practice that culminated in the Romish abuse, we may attain to a conception of the Sacrament which is spiritually edifying. It is already a step towards this end, when we observe with Zwingli that Jesus not only said, "This (bread) is My body," but also declared on other occasions, "I am the Door," "I am the true Vine." We do not adhere to the letter of the announcement in the latter cases : we see at once that there is a spiritual meaning ; there are even manifestations of Christ and His saying truth to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. We are well aware that one needs to bring a religious mind to the statements, I am the door, I am the vine ; there is not a manifestation of Christ by means of them to anyone and everyone, whatever the heart and life may be. So the face of the earth, especially in spring and autumn, is calculated to impress us with the skill of the Divine Artist, to reflect in some degree His glory and beauty, and even to bring us into His presence for good, or to be a channel of blessing ; but for this purpose we need to come to the inspection of the objects with a devout, prepared mind ; we get out of the earth what we bring to it. It is the thoughts cherished, in conjunction with the objects and helped out by them, that manifest God.

ance remain very defective, and cannot satisfy a Being of infinite purity. Even so, we point to the other fact that

So the words, "This is My body," have a spiritual meaning ("the flesh profiteth nothing"), and we need to come to the ceremony of the Sacrament with a prepared mind. Now, there is much in our experience that is fitted to prepare us; there is much to create the special sense of hunger in the heart and mind, and of a thirst for joy, for refreshing gladness. We are placed in a world which is unsatisfying, not to be trusted, often even tragic in what it exhibits. Neither can one's own thoughts, feelings, and life in its entirety be regarded with complacency; it would not be well if one did rest contented with them. We crave for peace with our Maker, in spite of ruinous sin and the unrest experienced in the world, and for a plentiful gift of goodness and mercy from the God of heaven. This hunger and thirst of the soul is a standing characteristic of our nature. There is a profound, permanent, we may even say universal, craving on the part of mankind for what is truly good and above this earth. But if we have faith in God at all, we will hold that it could not be the will of a God of all goodness, that man, the greatest of His works on earth, should only and always pine and lament in his inward being, even when he longs for God and for righteousness: there would be no glory to the Creator in that, but a blot on His handiwork. The glory and joy is when He satisfies His people with goodness, that they may live and praise Him with understanding, devotion, and returning love, as man alone of all God's earthly creatures can do. And so, in His own time and as often as it is for good—not necessarily at the moment when the faithful receive the sacramental elements (else we could command the times of blessing), though it may be then, since the means, as we can see, are specially appropriate and suggestive—He manifests Himself to His own in the Person of the spiritual Christ, as the food and refreshing of the soul. The ceremony does not produce the desired effect by purely supernatural means, but it expresses in a special manner what is in the mind of the faithful, and enables them to fix their souls anew and with vividness and in the spirit of prayer on the perfect Object of desire; and so increases the spiritual store, is a channel of special blessing.

Another modern writer, Professor Herrmann, who has enforced with great effect the truth that our apprehension of the *inner life* of the historical Jesus works in us the experience of God's real existence and presence with us for good, and who gives us to understand that it is mainly the Person of Jesus as He walked and talked and laboured among men that he is thinking of, nevertheless makes it clear—in this differing entirely from Wernle—that the nature of our Lord is seen in perfection in His death (*Communion of the Christian with God*, 2nd Germ. ed., p. 70ff.). But as to how one apprehends the Person of Christ or His inner life, Herrmann has nothing to say, except that it is one's own affair (p. 79f.). In a later volume he shows how the ripening

the man's heart is firmly set, as regards its main current, on God and on the very highest goodness, and his life tends to the realisation of what he approves; and we hold to the trust and conviction, that, as between the two conceivable courses of aiding such a soul by the gift of peace and by all possible means, corrections, and consolations, because it is advancing towards a perfect goal, however distant from it as yet, and, on the other hand, casting it off because of iniquity, though it is leaving that iniquity behind, the former course is that which will be adopted by a Being of absolute perfection, and the latter is not. At the best, it is true, this man sins daily, in spite of all his Christian aspirations. Still there is the countervailing and equally certain fact, that he can and does repent and aspire to all holiness daily; and such is the authority, such the attractive power of perfect goodness as seen in Christ, that even though sinning he continues to make that loftiest goal the chief object of desire, never putting it out of mind, running towards it throughout his life, rising again after every fall. Which is to be held the credible attitude of a God of holy love—that He should forthwith renounce all dealings with him, allowing him to become reprobate and leaving him to his ruinous fate, or that He should endure his backslidings and slowness, and train his steps in the way of perfect holiness? Clearly, it is the latter. Even though we contemplate man's sin in the worst light and God's holiness in the best, we can rest firmly in the full forgiveness of the penitent and trustful who judge moral consciousness, together with the observation of religious faith in others, creates profound and intolerable unrest, a sense of helplessness, and so impels to the life of religion. But the acknowledged object of faith, even at the commencement of the religious life, is represented as being the Person of Christ (Herrmann, *Ethik*, 1901, p. 65 ff.).

Scholz (pp. 145-150 above), while emphasising the distinctive characteristics of the active life of Jesus, yet finds, like Herrmann, that the Revelation is completed in Christ's Death; and so doubtless do the majority of modern theologians.

themselves in the light of Christ's complete standard ; and we do so, not in spite of God's entire holiness, but because of it. We see that here, as much as anywhere, the strictest insistence on justice would mean injustice, and the ultimate and unnecessary loss of what is very precious in man. Doubtless the mercy, patience, and long-suffering of God are amazing, and utterly pass all comprehension ; but the wonder or strangeness should not lead one to treat His forgiveness as unthinkable, or as not to be trusted in our sober judgment. Worship, adoration, gratitude, are loudly called for, as we reflect how Christian men, who all their life sin daily, are daily forgiven. But as a help to the preservation of belief in such forgiveness as a reality, we have the case of many a merciful man, who forgives whenever there is true repentance, and is patient with those who have long been degraded, and who, even on coming to a better mind, are often perverse, wilful, and culpably slow in reforming their habits. There is at all events a something in man's mercy which reflects, however faintly, the infinite mercy of God. What the best men do in small measure, God does in perfect measure. The mystery in God's mercy promotes worship, deepens the spirit of devotion, but does not prevent belief.

In another respect also we see one and the same principle exemplified when forgiveness is granted by God and by man respectively, although as applied by the Deity the principle is realised in its fulness. It seems, no doubt, that there is a fundamental difference in principle when we observe that man forgives without a mediator—above all, without the death of a mediator. However, in both cases there is, and must be, *mediation* ; and in both cases the question in the last resort comes to be, What is *all* the goodness that is applicable to the situation dealt with, or that ought to have been fulfilled by the person who is

to be the object of mercy? If man is to forgive a transgressor completely and from the heart, he requires him, not only to turn from the manifest evil which he has committed against him, but to recognise and pursue the path of thorough integrity as relevant to the special circumstances,—even, as far as may be (in the case of those delinquents who have had the requisite knowledge and training), the path of Christian integrity. It may, in fact, be said that the standard of Christ, of Christian righteousness, so far as it is discernible and applicable to the case, must be accepted by him who is to be the object of man's full compassion, the standard, too, as regards both action and spirit; that is, there must be an undertaking and real endeavour to comply in time to come with all the obligations admittedly resting upon one, and there must be no falling away even from love, no ungracious performance of the mere letter of the law. A bare form of obedience is objectionable to man as it is to God, and will not serve the purpose. And it must not be assumed that difficulties which may present themselves will justify the non-fulfilment of what is meet. Indeed, in certain cases the duty to man is voluntarily to risk the life itself; dishonour would otherwise be incurred. Man calls upon man to be righteous under trial, in some instances to be righteous unto death! And if there has been a delinquency, it can be condoned only if the requirement now specified is admitted, with manifest sincerity and contrition, as an incumbent obligation. Even here, therefore, there is real mediation: *something must come between* him who forgives and him who is forgiven, namely, goodness, and at length entire goodness of heart and conduct, as the particular position determines it.

Now, as towards God, our duty is, that all our days we ought to be devoted to Him as sons, and upright in thought, word, and deed; we ought to be always as Christ

was. Christ is understood as perfect goodness. God restores the sinner to His full favour when He is supplicated by one who sincerely reverences the goodness of Christ, and who goes on to adore that same nature of Christ as the death of the Cross reveals it in perfection. On the one hand, then, even in respect to mediation, there is no complete and thoroughgoing opposition between the two cases which for our purpose have been so often looked at together. The principle which is applied by the Deity is otherwise known to us in the earthly relations of mankind. Thus faith is supported by ascertained and intelligible facts of life, and is therefore the stronger. It is better to found religious trust on a principle that is grasped, than to have recourse, in contemplating the Cross, to artificially heightened feeling merely; indeed, if we begin to abandon the sure ground of knowledge and experience, and attempt to mount up to another region where something totally and absolutely strange to us is presented, we should, as we saw, have neither thought nor language that could be appropriately applied to such dark, mysterious portent; or, to keep to the special matter we are here concerned with, God's forgiveness would, in such circumstances, begin to be meaningless and valueless to us. On the other hand, as we look to the conditions of His forgiveness, there is the vast difference from all other known or knowable cases, that He, as the Creator and Preserver of men, fitly calls for lifelong holiness like His own in them, and we hear and assent to the demand. As a God of perfectly holy love, He seeks the very highest well-being of His children, and sets the very highest goal of blessedness before them. Accordingly, without changing the principle which has been referred to, He has charged it in the Christian revelation with the fullest possible content, has carried it out to its perfect fulfilment; in such wise that, while we can grow in faith and knowledge all our days through the means offered

in that revelation, the mind of God is never comprehended, but continues to compel our wonder and devotion. He is lastingly adored and praised with heart and understanding.

Was Christ in death substituted for sinners, and was it just that God should have allowed One who was wholly righteous to suffer so grievously? Now, without doubt there was no arbitrary or unmoral transference of Christ's merits to the undeserving; nor will we assert that those who have been guilty cease to be guilty because of what Christ has done, a thing that is impossible. And God never required to be reconciled to men; He loved them when they were yet impenitent sinners. Yet the full revelation in the life and death of Jesus was made on the earth that God might forgive mankind fully, and draw them to the love and practice of such genuine righteousness as would please Him and satisfy their own hearts. Without that revelation they could not have had a full knowledge of the Divine will with them and of their own highest possibilities, could not have known what an entirely right nature for man was, would only know that theirs was not right; and, moreover, and above all, there would not have been that attracting, quickening power which could raise them effectually to their loftiest state. That God might enlighten them completely and extend the greatest mercy and blessing to them, Christ's work was accomplished. But that work involved the extremity of trial, as the manifestation of the purest and loftiest goodness on earth must do. The greatest suffering in death, springing from the inevitable hate of sinners, was the means of showing the obedience and love to be perfect. Christ's mission for mankind involved this suffering—a recompence which they deserved and He did not. So He suffered *for* them (in their behalf); and as, in consequence, they are delivered from the evil of separation from God, and from spiritual

and eternal death, and their punishments are turned into chastisements, the beneficial, purifying chastisements which a father of love inflicts, Christ is truly said to have suffered the penalty *in their stead*. But there was no payment to God of the exact amount that man owed. And there is nothing of the nature of legal fiction, no arbitrary ascription of Christ's merits to other men, as if they were inherent in them, nothing that offends our moral sense in any way. The very idea of forgiveness implies that something is remitted (without an equivalent). Man forgives, and ought to forgive, in this sense; and it can never be made out that he is more merciful than God. God is entirely holy, not as taking means to blot out past sin, in the sense of making the past *per impossibile* as if it had never been, but as drawing men who have been sinful to the acknowledgment and hatred of all their sin, to the love of Himself, and to the love and pursuit of what is entirely holy and Christlike, till this is their permanent habit.

On the other hand, let one try to realise to himself the meaning and value of that forgiveness which might be supposed to be obtained independently of the gospel of Christ, and the difficulties and misgivings that emerge will be insuperable. On what terms is it received? If it is answered, There are none, the conscience calls it worthless, the giver of it being regardless of morality. If it is said there has simply to be repentance before God for sin, and the choice of goodness, this is the initial teaching of the gospel itself. Only, as we further interrogate the gospel and our own hearts, we find ourselves obliged to ask, What sin and what measure of goodness have we to contemplate in the matter? It could not suffice to take a minimum of each, or to make some arbitrary selection of the measures, and permanently stop there. We must continue to ask, What is the ultimate standard of duty, the full obligation, which is incumbent on us? There is none that we can

really rest in except the standard of the purest righteousness such as was in Christ, and the requirement that this righteousness shall be maintained at all hazards, even unto death.

The further difficulty was mentioned, that it does not seem consistent with God's justice that Christ, though innocent, should have suffered so severely as He did—more than any other man has done. But this difficulty is not one which attaches specially to the Christian method of salvation. Prosperity and suffering are not invariably proportioned on this earth to merit and demerit, a fact that has been a standing trial to faith. And the innocent often suffer for the guilty. If, however, the heart is right, the suffering of sacrifice is cheerfully endured. The patriot gladly dies for his country, and there is a peculiar pleasure in fighting hard in any cause which is unquestionably good; there is nothing to be compared to it in inglorious ease. "For the joy that was set before Him, Christ endured the Cross." The work which He undertook and finished in accordance with His Father's will, and to which love itself constrained Him, laying Him under necessity by its own unequalled power,—that was a most glorious work; and this had been felt by Him with exultation at every stage. This fact will not lessen the gratitude we owe and feel, for the suffering was on any view immeasurable; but it helps to prevent us from regarding the occurrence as incredible in the Providence of God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The bearing of the Resurrection on the subject of the Atonement has been referred to at p. 172.

## PART IV HISTORICAL

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### CHAPTER XIV

#### ANSELM AND ABELARD ON THE ATONEMENT

CHRISTIANITY is a historical religion, and the truth for us will be an organic development proceeding from the original Revelation in the gospel through the great historical lines of teaching which have prevailed in the Church; God having been the Inspirer and Guide of the Christian flock throughout the centuries till now. We have still and always to come back to Christ as He is presented in the New Testament. But we cannot do this *per saltum*, *i.e.*, if there is an entire disregard of the faith and Christian knowledge that have been passed on to us from recent generations,—if there is an abrupt departure from the way the fathers trod, instead of a continuation and advance upon the same path.

The fact that Christianity is a historical religion means that the truth embodied in that faith cannot be demonstrated by the individual mind as the “eternal truth of reason,” which is independent of Christianity and merely illustrated by it. The religion doubtless is reasonable, and it is of universal import; there has been a Revelation of

the eternal nature of God and of the will of God with all men in every land and time. But this was revealed through men in history, and the Revelation was completed in the historical Christ; and as surely as we have to go to the material world for the facts which yield the rational and universal truths of science, and must not rest merely in abstract speculation regarding nature, we can reach the objective truth in religion which we need, only when we have recourse to the Revelation furnished to the world in history. Without that basis we should only have had personal opinions as numerous and various as the individuals that held them, and no means of attaining agreement or of correcting error. The historical Revelation is required, if the religion is to be rational and to contain truth which is universally valid.

Besides, the historical matter can at no stage be set aside without grievous loss. In Christianity, the history can never be superseded. Goethe has said, "The best that history gives us is the enthusiasm it arouses."<sup>1</sup> In order that the spirit, the quickening power, the enthusiasm that the religion is capable of creating, may be gained and preserved, the history, and especially the crowning figure of the history, must be lastingly reverted to. There is no form of *pure thought* which takes us to a higher stage of reality. Only, the meaning of the history and revelation, and the nature of the goodness of Christ, may be interpreted without assignable limit by the reason.

Furthermore, religion is a form of life: the dead in soul have no appreciation or understanding of it. The Christian religion in its highest reach, as it existed in the first days of the Church, is understood through the kindred life of the present. There has been a continuous stream of spiritual life in the Church from the days when Christ walked the

<sup>1</sup> Goethe's *Maxims and Reflections*; trans. by Bailey Saunders p. 163.

earth till now: thus and thus only there is always the means of appropriating more of the substance of the Revelation. That Revelation is not strange to us, even as it appeared in Him who was the Life indeed. There is a present possession enabling us, when the necessary means are adopted, to "have the life more abundantly." Thus, even for the paramount purpose of learning more of Christ, the Christian tradition and practice that have been bequeathed to us will be received and cherished with due piety. They are the channel of life, without which we should be spiritually destitute; they have been the means of forming quickened souls that have communicated to us in turn the life, the inner sense, and the discipline that qualify us, under God, for entering further into the scope of the Revelation recorded in the New Testament. There is a fight of faith for the individual believer; what has been brought to him he must interpret for himself, must appropriate, apply, purify, and extend. And whatever the treasure may be which he ultimately acquires as he goes back to the sources, it will be articulated or fused with the matter of tradition which he first inherited; there is one faith, one life, in the past and down through the centuries to the present. The elements of truth in the great systems of belief that have come down to us and made us what we are, will be preserved and incorporated in any presentation of the faith that is still to be of service to us.

In particular, as regards the Atonement, which has been dealt with at considerable length in the preceding pages, we require to see how the explanation of it which has been here attempted harmonises with the main presentations which have moulded the thought of Christians in past generations. Now, with respect to Divine Forgiveness, the great question which has exercised the theological schools of the West has been the question whether God's forgiveness

through Christ is absolutely free, objective as we should now say, the gift of grace alone ; or whether man himself, by fulfilling the necessary conditions, contributes in part to the result ? Such was the question as debated in the famous treatises of the Middle Ages, and so it reappears substantially to-day in the discussions which have been started anew on the nature of the Atonement, and which have already been alluded to (p. 186 ff.). Many have been chiefly impressed by the one aspect of the matter, many by the other. Accordingly there is a dual tradition passed on to us—two main lines of thought on the same subject. Throughout the ages till now, both sides have been largely represented by men of the greatest eminence and piety. We have much reason, therefore, to expect that the truth in which we can rest will embody and reconcile both the leading branches of the tradition, will take up into itself the substance of the tradition as a whole.

To revert to the matter itself on which theological opinion has been divided. On the one hand, if some spiritual change or incipient virtue in the mind of the individual is demanded as the ground on which the pardoning grace of God is bestowed, the principle of justification by works appears to be introduced ; human merit, it seems, counts for something ; the reward has in some degree been earned by the creature, and the latter might even be entitled to cherish a certain feeling of complacency or self-esteem for having made the better choice. But, above all, when it is remembered what *sin against God* implies, namely, infinite guilt, it becomes evident that no mere man could undo the evil ; only the Infinite God Himself could provide a sufficient remedy. On the other hand, if all human merit is denied, if the gift is wholly of grace, if man contributes literally nothing to the effect, and is not even warranted to entertain the sense of having done well in returning to God, it seems that when he is forgiven through Christ, his

justification rests on arbitrary, unreal, and fictitious grounds. He is counted righteous, though as yet there is nothing whatever in him to indicate that he is actually righteous; and nothing whatever, no potential germ in his feeling or will, that promises to develop into righteousness: at least it is not on the ground of any goodness, actual or possible, in him that he is made the recipient of the great spiritual benefit of salvation. Why then is this individual selected at all from among others for that benefit? Must faith, if it is to be of saving efficacy, be ethically quite worthless?

Here we are brought face to face with the two aspects of the matter which have been associated principally with the great names of Anselm and Abelard. According to Anselm,—and for our present purpose the later modification of his theory, the transition from the sphere of civil to that of criminal justice, is immaterial,—God alone can do what is needful to procure man's justification from an offence of infinite magnitude, and He did the whole as an act of free grace. He provided a free and full Atonement for infinite guilt in the infinite merits of the sacrifice of Christ the God-man. The entire freeness of salvation, the perfection and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and man's utter incapacity in the matter of procuring forgiveness, are here emphasised. But, according to Abelard, there is at least some sign of a better mind awakened in man, some symptom of love is noticeable in the sinner, as the effect of the Divine Revelation of love in Christ; and hence the man is treated as just because he has actually begun to be just; the new and dominant current of his being sets towards righteousness; he has actually entered on the way that leads to perfection. There is no fiction underlying the treatment accorded to him.

It is well understood that the Church in the main has followed the leading of Anselm, finding that the greatness of the Christian salvation is thus brought to view, that the

love of God in giving His Son, and the glory of Christ as the gracious Redeemer of the world by His all-sufficient sacrifice of Himself, are thus interpreted in their sublime reality, and that man's true position as the object of undeserved favour is brought home to him. The mind of the Church has been expressed in the words of the hymn :

"Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

But, on the other hand, Schleiermacher, the most influential theologian of the nineteenth century, adopted the type of doctrine presented by Abelard.<sup>1</sup> Schleiermacher has had very numerous followers, especially in his own country. But we find this type of thought recurring in many parts at this day, namely, in the class of thinkers, already alluded to, in whose view the Atonement is accomplished as a positive reality where the spirit or life of Christ is actually reproduced in men. And from Oxford there has lately come an able and emphatic restatement of the Abelardian doctrine of the Atonement, and it is maintained that Abelard is "the first, the greatest, the most modern of all the scholastic theologians," while his doctrine of the Atonement is believed to be "as noble and as perspicuous

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Atonement, see Kitschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, vol. i. (Historical) p. 465 ff., especially p. 517 (1st ed.), where Schleiermacher is quoted as follows : "Sins and the consciousness of sins are a matter that concern the old man ;—I am a new man as being in living communion with Christ ;—therefore the sins which I committed when I was in the condition of the old man do not concern me any longer."—Here the important point is the inference which is drawn : the believer is a new man participating in the life of Christ, *therefore*—on the ground of what is now inherent in the Christian himself—sin and the consciousness of sin are overcome. And Frank, *Gesch. u. Kritik der neueren Theologie*, discussing the Christology of Schleiermacher, gives the following as the teaching of this theologian on the subject of the Atonement (p. 113) : "Christ's redeeming work consists in communicating to the faithful the power of His own God-consciousness ; His Atoning work in taking up the faithful into the fellowship of His own peace and blessedness."

a statement as can even yet be found of the faith which is still the life of Christendom.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus history presents two great streams of thought on the subject we are treating, the one seeking to do justice to the truth as to the freeness of the Christian salvation, the fact that it is wholly a gift of grace to undeserving men, and as to the need and sufficiency of the work which Christ finished on His Cross; the other enforcing the necessity of faith on man’s part in order to the attainment of the gift,—a faith, too, that is more than formal, and almost empty, which is rather a strong, dominating power, constituted of the various elements of our nature, belief, love, and moral energy, and so implying the germ of a new and better life.<sup>2</sup> We may rest assured that an explanation

<sup>1</sup> Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, 1898, p. 145. The substance of the Abelardian view is given in the volume named at p. 136f., where it is said regarding it: (1) “There is no notion of vicarious punishment, and equally little of any vicarious expiation or satisfaction, or objectively valid sacrifice” (though Dr. Rashdall himself admits that the life and death of Christ were “in the truest and highest sense” a sacrifice). (2) “The atoning efficacy of Christ’s work is not limited to His death. . . . His whole life excites the love of man, moves his gratitude, shows him what God would have him be, enables him to be in his imperfect way what Christ alone was perfectly. . . . (3) Hence the justifying effect of Christ’s work is a real effect, not a mere legal fiction. Christ’s work really does make men better, instead of merely supplying the ground why they should be considered good, or be excused the punishment of sin, without being really made any better than they were before.”—The widespread influence of this mode of thought, not at one period merely but throughout the Christian centuries, is set forth by Dr. Rashdall at p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Another notable example showing the influence of the Abelardian type of thought in our own land and time we have in the case of the late Professor A. B. Bruce, who will not be held to have gone too far with the school of Abelard. Speaking of the moral contents of faith, he says: “A faith which is no more than a mere hand to lay hold of an external righteousness has no existence except in the brain of a scholastic theologian. Faith, if it deserves the name, is always very much more than this. The more the better. Faith cannot have too much moral contents: the more it has, the better it will serve us from the beginning to the end of our Christian career. At the very least, true faith is always a humble trust in the grace of God, and that is a thing of

which takes account of one only of these influential historical currents will be found to be defective and one-sided: the truth will incorporate both. And that because the objective and subjective aspects of truth imply each other.

In seeking a reconciliation of the two contrasted schemes, we do well to recall the matter that has already been dwelt upon, that a doctrinal result is best understood when we keep in view the living facts of religion, and when the development of these which led up to the final issue in doctrine is traced out (p. 213 ff.). On the ground of ab-

real moral value. Then it lies in the very nature of true faith to open the soul to the influence of Christ; so that from the day we believe in Him He becomes a renovating power in our life. Lastly, the scrupulous desire to shut out legalism in the form of the imputation of faith, as the germ of a personal Christian righteousness, may readily defeat itself by introducing unawares legalism under another guise. We do not get rid of legalism by careful theological definitions designed to exclude it. We may introduce thereby a dogmatic legalism as blighting in its influence on the Christian life as the Judaism of the apostolic age or the Sacramentarianism of Rome. It cannot be good for the health of our piety that we should be constantly taking care that our faith in the God of all grace shall be as destitute as possible of moral contents, lest perchance we fall into the mistake of finding in an ethically rich faith a ground of boasting" (*St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 156). And again (p. 149 f.)—"To believe in God, to trust in His grace, is emphatically a righteous act. It is to do justice to God, to His character, to His spirit; to think right thoughts about Him, and to cherish a becoming attitude and feeling towards Him. It is the fundamental act of true righteousness. It is the only form of righteousness possible for sinners; it is a form of righteousness possible for the greatest sinner; nay, which is not only possible for him, but which he of all men can best exhibit, for the greater the sinner, the greater the honour done to God by trusting in His grace. He who, having sinned much, trusts in Divine grace, is 'strong in faith, giving glory to God' (Rom. iv. 20). But there is no ground for boasting in that fact. Boasting is excluded by the nature of the case. A great sinner trusting in God's grace is simply one who humbly, yet trustfully, confesses his deep need of forgiveness. Such an one may, as Jesus taught, be exalted by God, but he cannot possibly exalt himself. The denizens of the slums do not think themselves very virtuous in accepting the invitation to a free breakfast; they simply eat ravenously and thankfully."

stract doctrine or finished theory, contradictions, dilemmas, naturally arise: in the actual process of life they are solved and disappear. The significance of our Lord's sacrifice of Himself has been wrapped in great and almost total mystery, largely because His death has been regarded as an absolutely isolated occurrence. In reality, as we have seen, faith in our Lord's finished work is essentially and in principle one with faith in the goodness of His life, or with faith in God and in true righteousness. The position of matters is simplified when we look first at the earlier stage of faith, and proceed from it to the stage at which the significance of the Crucifixion is apprehended. (1) It is manifest that, as the prodigal, taking home to himself nothing relating to the efficacy of Christ's work, simply repents, returns to his Father, and is forgiven, this forgiveness is *free*, and it is for man to accept the gift as of grace alone. Past sin cannot be made good by the utmost he can do; and even in his improved state he continues to fall miserably short of what he ought to be. He continues to sin daily. Truth requires, then, that the chief, overmastering feelings on coming before God ought to be humiliation for sin and gratitude for undeserved mercy. These feelings are awakened in full as we go on to know the perfect Revelation in Christ's death. In other words, God's forgiveness through Christ is a free gift from Him; the necessary and all-sufficient means for it have been provided by Him; and the blessing is obtained on the condition that there is penitence and trust on the part of the recipient, and not at all on the ground of righteousness or works. To the end of life we rest in the mercy and gift of God, whatever fruits of holiness we may produce. In so far, Anselm's teaching sets forth the truth. (2) At the same time it is better to be a penitent than an impenitent sinner; a right spirit begins to be formed in one as he bethinks himself of the error of his ways, and asks to be forgiven.

Even though God's preventing and assisting grace enables him to gain this better spirit, his freedom is appealed to; there is a duty of faith. The faith that accepts the Divine offer is not a mere receptacle in man for admitting heavenly gifts, a form or faculty which is itself without moral content or quality. It is not mere belief or knowledge (Jas. ii. 19), though it includes this as one element (Heb. xi. 6). There is a new and better feeling formed within the heart, a hatred of sin, and a desire for God and for goodness. Even the will begins to be stirred wherever there is genuine faith; and that movement of the will is necessary in order to constitute the faith, and not merely as an effect or proof of it. If there is no resolution with reference to the choice and course in life for the future, if the former purpose to go on in sin continues unchanged, there is not yet what can be called faith, whatever knowledge and sentiment there may be: there is only what may be called religiosity. There has to be that practical and fruitful decision which is implied in the words of the parable, "I will arise and go to my Father."<sup>1</sup> Now, both the theological schools, Christians generally, as formed by the Reformation, hold that faith is needful in order that man may receive the blessing. And this faith means a moral awakening and a commencing transformation in him. As soon as any individual is taken back to Divine favour, the very fact that he requires to have faith as an indispensable condition shows that at least the germ of true righteousness exists in him. Thus we recognise the truth which Abelard asserted. (3) Combining the two views of Anselm and Abelard, we say, first, with the latter, A *fit* subject for forgiveness has a right spirit begun in him. There is aspiration to the Highest, and aspiration is an affection of the will. The faith that is requisite for salvation includes, as one of its component

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Biedermann's analysis of Faith, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 2nd ed., vol. i. § 80, p. 219 ff.

elements, the germ of that good will that ultimately manifests itself in good works. But again, as Anselm would insist, the recipient of *forgiveness* must bear himself meekly as one who is treated better than he deserves. A contrite spirit constitutes no claim to favour, but teaches one for the first time to admit that he has no claim, and that the mercy accorded to him is of grace, and entirely free. God loved sinners before they showed any sign of spiritual or moral improvement. For their benefit, He took the initiative in revealing Himself and His righteousness. He first loved them, and manifested His love, and *when they responded* He forgave them. The forgiveness springs from the Divine initiative, rests on Divinely appointed means, is free and of grace, while yet it presupposes a moral condition or change in the recipient of it. And, as has previously been stated, we are helped to realise this Divine act so conditioned, this love of God and this forgiveness, by looking to the instances that reflect them in some measure among the best people. Even the deep things of God that concern us most are not so isolated, so distinct from all else that we know, as to appear unreal, and to pass away in consequence from thought.

In practice, people still follow one or other of two leading paths in seeking to make the truth set forth in the Atonement their own; and these two lines have an affinity with those which have just been described as associated with the names of Anselm and Abelard respectively. If they are followed out, the ways meet at a common goal. Doubtless the one which has more frequently been adopted is that which leads directly to the Cross of Christ. Men have been induced in their need to look with a contrite spirit on the Crucified Christ, and have seen in His final endurance a Revelation of God's spotless holiness, and of His boundless love for man; and being taught in consequence to

sorrow for their sin, and to hate it in sincerity, and to honour and trust God for His infinite righteousness and mercy, they have found that the peace of heaven was instilled into their hearts, and that their life was enriched with many spiritual blessings. Here the greatness and sufficiency of Christ's work of Redemption are acknowledged with Anselm. But, in the first instance at least, no satisfactory account can be given by such persons of the faith that lays hold of the blessing. Nothing regarding it is understood, and there is perhaps no wish to understand it; there is a simple, quasi-corporeal "resting" on Christ for salvation. Faith is nothing to thought; its quality or content is not weighed; Christ on His Cross is everything. There is, it is true, the *latent* thought that the Christ who revealed God in His death had always been altogether good and worthy of love; it is assumed by the believers referred to that it was no ordinary man, but the perfectly spotless Christ, that was crucified. They possess a sufficient knowledge of the Gospel narratives of our Lord's earthly life (in which, as all can see, He taught the highest truth, and went about doing good), to be able to avoid positive mistake on this matter, and to have an underlying conviction which is sound and right. Because He is viewed in death by people who have so far a right feeling for His nature and character, that view is fraught with blessing. Yet the blessing would be still greater if those ideas and feelings as to the goodness and life and work of Jesus were consciously realised. Convictions which are latent cannot have the same value and effect as those that are explicit and articulate. This appears especially when such persons proceed to ask what rational ground they have for believing in the forgiveness which is obtained of God through the death of Christ. As thinking beings, they will often be constrained to ask this. It is found that the intellect has its rights, that in religion we require to hold the truth, and

ought not to rest in any delusion, however comforting ; and that, if we have got the truth, it will approve itself as such to the reason. This demand for the truth urges people to ask, among other things, what it is that enables one individual to derive the greatest benefit from the Revelation in Christ, while another derives none. What is the nature of that *faith* in man which, as Christians hold, is on the human side the condition for securing forgiveness ? What is there in the spirit of the believer that determines the momentous issue in his favour ? For many, there is not the rest or satisfaction which is legitimately craved till this question is answered, and the rational process on which forgiveness is based is traced out and understood. Believers of the class referred to began in the spirit of Anselm by concentrating their soul on the Christ without or above them ; but while preserving that vision, they require to ask, with Abelard, what spirit the man is of to whom the Christian Redemption is applied.

Others, influenced by the modern spirit, follow the reverse order, being mainly concerned with Abelard, that their faith shall be at every stage a felt reality and a living power, while developing from less to more, till at length it lays hold of the gospel message in its fulness. Accordingly, they find themselves restrained, in the first instance, from adducing the perfect merits of Christ in His death as they approach God in quest of forgiveness. They cannot see how this death was instrumental for the purpose ; but, being persuaded that it is charged with meaning, and that Revelation culminates in it, they are desirous to learn and willing to wait. They would say : In any act of forgiveness, as we understand forgiveness, the presence of a mediating third person is not necessarily involved : the offended person and the offender meet by themselves alone. However, they discover that in the Gospels men are directed by Christ Himself to go before God precisely in this manner, namely,

as penitent prodigals; and that forgiveness is accorded to them when they come to a better mind, though they know nothing whatever of the significance of Christ's life or death. This procedure, then, can be followed still, and it is entered on with clear-sighted faith: there is demanded only the filial sense for God and the sense for goodness. It has Christ's authority; it is conformable to the practice we know and approve of among men, and it yields forthwith abundant blessing. True, those who adopt it are only at the beginning of a long course of faith and holiness, and that course must be pursued if the blessing is to be increased, or if it is even to last in any form. The man who, on first approaching his Father, had confessed sin and sought goodness in the imperfect forms in which he knew them, is trained to know God's perfect will with him, to see the standard of goodness in Christ's life, and the perfection of it in His death. There is a continuous growth in faith and in the knowledge of Christ: there is no abrupt transition as the final Revelation in the Cross is apprehended. And as there was no intellectual or moral stumbling-block at the commencement of faith, when but little of the contents of Revelation was accepted, neither is there at the close, inasmuch as the end is essentially and in principle harmonious with the beginning.

It is a great recommendation of the Abelardian view, that it directs attention to the *life* of Christ. The modern demand for an ideal of human life is satisfied; the glory of the Incarnation is exhibited. There is scope afforded for St. John's presentation of Christ as the Light of the world, as manifesting the glory of the Father in such a way that we can behold the glory, as full of grace and truth. This mediæval theologian is thus far in touch with modern thought, which has once more given prominence to the Incarnation, and has portrayed the historical Christ as He lived. Once more, Abelard emphasises the love of

God;<sup>1</sup> and again, whereas Anselm is concerned with the reconciliation of God towards men, Abelard is mainly concerned with the reconciliation of men to God.<sup>2</sup> And Abelard's thought is ethical, where Anselm's is juristic. In these respects also Abelard anticipates recent and now prevalent ideas.

However, if we proceed in the spirit of Abelard, it is at length recognised with Anselm and his followers that salvation is not only a gift of grace, free and unmerited, but is only to be obtained, in that fulness which is required, through the work of Christ finished in the death of the Cross. Indeed, while the general procedure of Abelard is adhered to, great care needs to be taken to appropriate the essence of Anselm's thought. For as, according to Abelard and his school, the *life* of Christ awakens and fosters love in men, the love that commends them to God, it appears difficult to answer the question, Why was the *death* of the sinless Christ necessary in order that men should be forgiven? At least this tragic issue does not seem indispensable. It was the majesty of the Divine nature, as emphasised by Anselm, the perfection of Divine righteousness and love, involving the requirement of perfect righteousness in men, that led to the completed Revelation. The final passion of our Lord lifts up His goodness and love to the height of heaven and towards infinity, and shows the kind of God with whom we have to do. With good reason the Church has seen the Revelation in Christ briefly comprehended in the Death of the Cross.

The contrasted views and the reconciliation here arrived at may be understood by a reference to the subjective and the objective aspects of truth. Anselm teaches in effect that there was an *objective* Atonement in the Death of

<sup>1</sup> Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, vol. i., 1st ed., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ritschl, *ibid.*, pp. 25, 36.

Christ: that event satisfied the demands of God, and opened up a way of salvation for man. On man's part, imitation of Christ's righteousness under suffering is required. Abelard dwells on the *subjective* condition of salvation as it would now be called, on the love engendered in man, the practical response called forth on his side. According to Abelard, there is no objectively valid sacrifice (*supra*, p. 259), though love in man is stirred by the historical (objective) Revelation in Christ.

At this day we have the distinction reproduced in that form, and by means of those two terms which are employed in modern thought. It is often held with Anselm—and some parts of St. Paul's teaching are believed to bear out the view—that the sacrifice of Christ has mainly, if not entirely, an *objective* significance, that God "regards the world differently" in consequence of the coming of Christ to earth, and because of His finished work of Redemption. A peculiar form of the view in question, already treated here, is presented by Ritschl. The Atonement is said to be for the Church, to have objective validity for it; so that the individual who belongs to the Church can assume forthwith that the privileges of the redeemed community accrue to him as a member. Thus Ritschl, in his contention with the Pietists, found that the individual may dispense with conversion.

Now here, as in every other sphere of human thought or interest, the objective and subjective sides of truth are complementary to each other: they cannot stand separately. Either by itself alone is valueless and even meaningless.<sup>1</sup> This is indicated in the teaching both of Anselm and Abelard, though there is only an adumbration of the truth.

<sup>1</sup> The proof of this dictum of philosophy as regards truth in general, including religious truth,—every matter that can be of any interest to us, or that can, indeed, have any meaning,—is given by Professor Flint, *Agnosticism*, e.g., at pp. 161, 173, 539 f.

The Atonement implies Christ's work on the one hand, and man's saving apprehension of it on the other. It implies man's saving apprehension. When Christ's Redeeming work was done so far as He was concerned,—when He triumphed over death,—God, no doubt, was entirely pleased *with Him*: “God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every name.” And God, who is love, always loved the world. But it is a different thing to say that, after Christ's finished work, God was pleased with the world, with all and sundry in it, with it as a world. The most that can be said is that the world had now its full opportunity, and that there was the joy which this fact occasioned. But what if it or many people in it rejected that opportunity by rejecting Christ? It or they would only be under the greater condemnation because of what He had revealed (cf. John xv. 22, 24). A vast number of persons have, as a matter of fact, come under that condemnation. It is only with a portion of the people in the world, only with a portion of the people in Christendom itself, that God can be pleased, even though Christ's perfect work has been done. Again, God regarded the faithful in Israel with favour before Christ came, and even, as we now hold, those of the heathen who followed the best light they had. What, then, is the meaning of the statement that He regarded the world differently in consequence of the work and suffering of Christ? There is a meaning, as has been said: then and only then the greatest things were made possible for the world. Only we must not go so far as to say that in God's sight the objective work of Christ was enough to undo or atone for the sins of all in the world, so that God could regard all in it with pleasure or approval as He could not do before—even those who remained impenitent and became hardened in sin. Similarly with regard to the Church. The Church is, when viewed in the largest sense, indispensable as a channel of

Christian blessings to the individual. But it is not enough to belong to the Church as a member: the merely nominal, or scandalously living, or unfruitful member is not to be regarded as justified before God because of his connection with the institution; rather his sin and responsibility are increased and placed in a clear light in consequence.

On the other hand, faith and love are not simply *subjective* as regards their ground: they must not be based on mere arbitrary fancies or feelings. That would mean that they are really baseless and worthless, anything we like to make them. They imply an apprehension of God's truth and goodness; they must rest on Revelation which is objective. The truth, and at length the whole truth as set forth in the gospel, is indispensable.

The issue, therefore, which alone can be regarded as entirely well-pleasing to God, is reached when the full objective truth of Christianity is subjectively accepted by all mankind, or when all men come to the knowledge of the perfect truth which has been brought to the world in Christ and Him crucified; the sincerity of their acceptance being proved by the restoration in them of righteousness like His. This is the issue foreseen by Jeremiah (xxxii. 31-34), and represented in its fulfilment in Rev. xi. 15.

As has been stated, the course of procedure which is represented by Abelard suits the modern mind. The modern spirit leads one to insist on getting to the bed-rock of reality, and on attaining clearness of view. Every science or art begins with plain, elementary, ascertained facts and processes, and seeks to advance with sure step to the higher branches, till at last it is confronted with mystery. So in religion. While many people may be taught practical Christianity in the school of life, and taught well, on the method approved by Anselm, there are many more passing through the same school, who

owing to their intellectual training and their whole bent of mind, can proceed only along the other line of advance. And with the spread of science and education, it seems evident that the number of these last is bound to increase.

## CHAPTER XV

### ST. PAUL'S TEACHING

THE consideration of the history of the topic discussed in the preceding chapter carries us back in thought to the Apostle Paul, and to his experimental and authoritative presentation of the means of salvation. There are various elements which go to constitute the teaching of St. Paul, and accordingly one is apt to single out those portions or phases which appear to tell in favour of a cherished view, to the neglect of others which speak, perhaps more strongly, in the opposite sense. It is well, therefore, in the interest of truth, to concentrate our attention at once on that essential feature of Paulinism which seems to run counter to what has been given forth throughout the present volume.

When Saul of Tarsus embraced Christianity, as the result of his vision when he was on the way to Damascus, he attained at the very time of his initiation to what must surely be called a completed faith, namely, faith not merely in the teaching or the goodness of Christ, or even in the Person of Christ as He walked and talked with men on earth, but faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ. And this personal experience seems to be reflected in his teaching. Faith in Christ crucified is represented as the fundamental religious belief, as the one effectual and permanent means by which people are restored to peace with God; while the only other conceivable means, namely, strict obedience to

God's law, St. Paul declares, in conformity with what he himself found by practical proof, to be futile. Redemption through the grace of God revealed in Christ's Cross, and brought near to the soul that has faith,—such is the essence of Paulinism ; and the Church, especially the Protestant Church, can never set aside Paul and the formulation of gospel truth which is connected with his name. We reflect how Paul with his distinctive message wrought marvels in the way of evangelising the heathen world. “ There were hardly any people who were less capable of understanding Jesus than those Greeks, whose sole surviving art was that of talking and disputing. . . . Paul and his companions succeeded so well, that round the *Æ*gean Sea the Christian colonies grew up and proved to be fresh, sound, full of vitality. Demons of vice became honourable men, thieves and ruffians became useful workmen ; troubled and sickly souls found peace in the love of God. There was a thorough cleansing out on a vast scale of filth and corruption, and at the same time love, patience, chastity, humility were implanted. . . . We must never forget that our own Christianity is a consequence of the missionary activity of Paul.”<sup>1</sup> The point that demands our attention is that the idea of growth in Christian faith seems, at first sight at least, to derive no support from the case of this apostle : his own Christian faith was even at the outset faith in Christ Crucified and Risen,—what we have repeatedly described as the consummation of faith. And by his preaching of salvation through the Cross of Christ he won the most

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *The Beginnings of our Religion*, 1st Germ. edition, p. 214. This writer, in his profound study of St. Paul, exaggerates the difference between the teaching of the apostle and his Master Christ (p. 111 ff.), and, moreover, allows for no variety in St. Paul's presentation of Christian truth according to the circumstances of the converts. A needful corrective, especially as regards the former point, is supplied by Dr. Caird (Master of Balliol) in his article, “ St. Paul and the Idea of Evolution,” *Hibbert Journal*, October 1903.

influential parts of the heathen world, and introduced Christianity effectually and permanently among the Gentiles.

Yet it is a mistake to think either that the apostle himself arrived at this characteristic faith *per saltum*, from a state of religious unbelief, or that he forthwith pressed on all others whom he sought to draw into the Christian fold the finished and rounded form of belief in the doctrine of the Cross which meant so much to himself. Saul had been a religious man, serving God according to his light, before becoming a disciple of Christ as the result of his Damascus vision. In his pre-Christian life he had known and worshipped the spiritual and holy God of the Old Testament. He had convictions as to righteousness and the need of righteousness in himself which were in a large measure true. And if his acceptance of Christianity was occasioned by his enlightenment regarding the Crucified and Risen Christ,—if his personal apprehension of the new faith began, not by his laying hold of what we regard as the simpler elements, but by an immediate grasp of Christian truth as seen in its culmination and in its fulness,—the peculiar situation in which he was placed accounts for this, and needs to be carefully kept in view. The position of Saul was very different from ours. He had not the Gospel narratives of Christ's teaching and work to instruct him as to the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached, and as to the grace and goodness of the Father. And he could not give a patient, unprejudiced hearing to the Christians who might have communicated to him the message of Jesus in detail: he was "mad" against them, as would-be destroyers of the true Jewish faith. Nor could the pure and precious fruit of Christianity in the world be apparent in his day, as it is now in many lands, telling what the tree that produced it must have been. In the case of Saul the normal way to the new faith was barred. He was made acquainted

with the end of the story before he heard the beginning ; and the end, looked at by itself, appeared to be a plain and palpable condemnation of the whole. One who had been crucified was proclaimed as the Messiah ! That shameful issue was utterly at variance with his preconceived Jewish ideas of Messianic glory, and he resented it with intense bitterness, and found it to be proof positive of the falsehood of the new proclamation. The other apostles had heard from Jesus the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the gracious announcement of the Divine Fatherhood, and were attracted in the first instance by that Revelation and by the heavenly goodness they witnessed in the words and works of Jesus. Their attachment to the Person of their Lord was well formed by the time of His death ; and so their faith, supported as it was by the crowning event of the Resurrection, was able to endure the scandal of Christ's Cross and soon to make them glory in it. But Saul, confronted at the outset with the picture of the crucifixion of the alleged Messiah, indignantly refused to join the upstart sect ; it must indeed be crushed out at all hazards. Judaism, the faith of the fathers and his own faith, would be disgraced by an event of the kind happening to the Messiah, and the supposition was not for a moment to be entertained. Here, then, was the one stumbling-block that Saul required to surmount. On this, his whole thought from the nature and circumstances of the case was concentrated. The obstacle was at length overcome ; but for this end preparation on his own part and a miracle on God's side were necessary. In spite of himself something of the character of Jesus had become known to him by report ; and it may be confidently assumed that, so far as the goodness of Jesus was thus realised by this God-fearing but mistaken Jew, it had puzzled him but yet commended itself to him, with the result that it had created much misgiving in his mind with regard to himself. At length it had been

impressively disclosed to him through its principal effects as these were brought under his own observation, through the faith and saintliness of the meek, brave martyrs like Stephen, which exhibited or even excelled the best traits that had been exemplified by the prophets and others whose lives and sufferings are delineated in the Old Testament. Could a deceiver and an enemy of the faith form such a pious and pure spirit in His followers? And, after all, was His endurance of ignominious suffering so significant of real dishonour as had at first appeared? Was not the chief Servant of God, as reported by Isaiah, the chief sufferer, healing others by his woes, and justifying many? So, it may reasonably be conjectured, the way was opened up for Saul to the truth that came by Christ; and the extreme bitterness, the madness, of his persecuting zeal, just before the crisis in his life, only serves to show that he more than suspected his course of action as towards the Christians to be seriously blameworthy. He had long been a God-fearing man, cleaving to righteousness as it was understood by him and his Jewish co-religionists; and by the time he was led to believe in the Crucified and Risen Christ, he was acquainted in some measure with the power and goodness of the earthly Jesus, and may well have been instructed, moreover, by the Old Testament as to the healing, saving efficacy of righteous endurance. It is important also to note that, though he had derived benefit from his earlier faith, he had not obtained enough; he was painfully groping after a higher good than the imperfect righteousness of the law. Thus the Revelation that Jesus yet lived came to this man "in the fulness of time." But even so a miracle was needed to convince him that the scandal of the Cross was removed, that Jesus still lived and was entirely good, and the Giver of that peace and hope which Saul had failed to find otherwise. The fact that a miracle was necessary shows that the spiritual path followed by St.

Paul was not the natural course which all had to traverse. The other earlier apostles had a very different, a steadily progressive experience, which we do well to recall and take to heart. There has been too prevalent a tendency to hold that, as regards the method of appropriating Christianity, as regards the means or gate of entrance to the Christian life, St. Paul's example and experience in their substance form our indispensable and sufficient model; that before there can be any grace or favour received from heaven by the soul, before God can have anything of value to say to it, that soul must know that its personal sin is forgiven through the Crucified Christ, and must understand the grounds of this forgiveness. This matter has previously been considered (p. 15 ff.). But even St. Paul's case does not warrant us to believe that there will be an immediate leap from complete irreligion to faith in Christ's Atonement through the Cross. Even his case shows a growth: it shows that God was for long approached in worship and obeyed, however imperfectly, by one who had not yet understood or in any sense accepted the truth revealed in Christ's Crucifixion. First, as a Jew he believed in God and in the righteous law of God, before he had heard anything of Christ. Next, he knew something of the nature of Jesus, of His life of goodness, through Christian men like Stephen, who had been formed by the power of Christ and reproduced something of His character. *After that*, he believed in the Crucified Messiah as the Saviour of the world.

No doubt Paul's own account of his religious history represents his true spiritual life as having an abrupt start and a sudden consummation. His pre-Christian career, in which he had once felt much confidence, is regarded by him with aversion and reprobation. Had he not proved himself the adversary of Christ and of the Kingdom of God on earth? "At the present day it is an utterly vain task to trace back his path till we reach

the thoughts cherished by him before his conversion. . . . There exists only a Christian theology identified with this apostle. Every word of his Epistles is derived from his Christian consciousness."<sup>1</sup> What he emphasises regarding the Jewish religion is the insufficiency of it as a means of satisfying his religious needs. Its utter inadequacy is set forth in the plainest terms, and this is practically the one and only thing he is concerned to say regarding it. Yet he would have allowed its positive value; he actually does so in certain indications which are occasionally afforded. At least, it awakened spiritual needs, made him acquainted with them; and in so far it was good and from God, it was a Revealed Religion. He speaks of the time when he advanced in the Jews' *religion* (Gal. i. 14). Israel was recognised by him with pride and affection as the elect race, with a great past behind it and a great future yet awaiting it. And the law is declared to be spiritual, to be holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. The Old Testament had made him acquainted even with the existence of faith in the earliest age of the Hebrews, namely, in Abraham, and with the fact that many of the choicest spiritual blessings had been shared by the godly in ancient Israel. Thus, from such intimations as the apostle himself supplies, we gather clearly that he would have admitted that, even prior to his conversion to Christianity, he possessed important religious privileges and made use of them; he belonged to a people for whom God and the things pertaining to God were everything; he had himself sincerely believed in God and acknowledged the law to be from Him; and with all his imperfections on his head he had yet striven to realise his religion in his conduct. His spiritual life, as may be inferred from some of his own avowals, had been

<sup>1</sup> Wernle, *Beginnings*, etc., p. 136.

a growth, though he is never led to dwell on that fact, but, on the contrary, is strongly impelled to exhibit the rupture in his inner experience when he became a Christian. The rupture was a fact, but yet only part of the truth relating to his early career.

Paul's experience, as was natural, is reflected in his teaching. As he himself saw the truth as to the saving purpose of the Crucifixion at the very time when he became a convert to Christianity, he makes the Death of Christ the central topic of his preaching to others. Whereas Jesus had made the burden of His message consist in the proclamation of the Fatherhood of God, and of the righteousness of the Kingdom of God, and only gave a few dark hints as to His death and the purpose of it, Paul avoids the subjects of the Divine Fatherhood and the prophetic work of Jesus, and expounds and magnifies the one all-important topic of the Revelation in the Cross. Yet there is no contradiction between the Master and the apostle. Jesus set forth the vital truth as to God's will with man in its natural simplicity and in its heavenliness. He embodied it in His life. Then the completed manifestation of goodness and love was made when He was obedient unto death. He did His work to perfection, and left it to others as St. Paul to set forth its significance, its results and implications. Even we may find cogent reasons why it would not have been fitting that Jesus should have fully interpreted and magnified His own perfect endurance, and that, too, before the victory was won. The extreme severity of the test or the human reality of it might have been doubted by mankind, if Jesus had calmly and at length dwelt upon its import, and so shown that He discounted success. Not that He ignored the subject of His death and its significance for the world: the truth could not

be covered over for any reason. While Jesus shrank in human weakness from the final ordeal, He had the conviction that His work would be completed and that it would be redemptive for the world. His blood of the new covenant was to be "shed for many for the remission of sins." He came "to give His life a ransom for many." However, Jesus does not set forth at length the meaning and purpose of His death, and it is equally noticeable that St. Paul passes over the sayings and doings of His life. The apostle does not indeed altogether set aside the substance of Christ's Galilean preaching. He shows in three passages that he was accustomed to impart to the Churches the truth regarding the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. vi. 9 f.; Gal. v. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 11 f.). But in the main there is the difference between Jesus and Paul as respects their teaching, that what the one omits the other supplies. A restatement of the Gospel narratives by Paul was unnecessary, and, further, he himself gives us plainly to understand that it would have been inexpedient. He required to assert his apostolic independence, to put in the foreground the original Revelation made to himself; whereas a rehearsal of the lifework of Jesus could only have been given by him at second-hand from reports received from the other apostles.

Now, the point that is of chief importance for us is that, while the subject of the Atonement which was accomplished by the Death of Christ forms the distinctive element of St. Paul's message, he does not press his elaborate exposition of the nature of the Atonement on the minds of all whom he addresses.<sup>1</sup> His Epistles to the Thessalonians contain no treatment of the question of justification, and only the barest allusion in one verse (1 Thess. v. 10) to the fact that "Christ died for us."

<sup>1</sup> So Bruce, *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 13 ff.

He declares a simple gospel of salvation "from the wrath to come," of deliverance in the Judgment through faith in God and in Christ the Lord, and often returns to this faith as a principle of the first importance, and urges again and again the necessity of being purified from sin, sanctified in spirit, soul, and body. Even when treating of Christ's Atonement in *Galatians* and *Romans*, he speaks of a faith, namely, Abraham's, which possessed a saving efficacy, though it was impossible that its object could have been the Crucified Christ. So, in his addresses to the heathen, *e.g.*, the Athenians (Acts xvii.), the saving significance of the death of Christ is not even indicated; the thoughts of the people are directed to God's greatness and spirituality and to their own duty, and to Christ who will be their Judge. The Athenian listeners are taught that God commands all men everywhere to repent, that the world will be judged in righteousness, and that Christ will be appointed the Judge, God having given assurance of this to all men by raising Him from the dead. And when addressing the men of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul says (Acts xiii. 38 f.), "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." A new and better way of forgiveness is announced, namely, the method of justification by faith; but an elaborate and finished doctrine is not laid down; the bearing of Christ's suffering on our sin is not touched upon: there is no demand that there shall be an assent to any fully reasoned doctrine on that matter, as a condition for the attainment of peace and favour with God. In general, as was remarked above, he himself gives us to understand that he had been accustomed to preach the Kingdom of God.

But while St. Paul put before beginners a comparatively

simple gospel only, and called for a simple but real and fruitful faith, he did not restrict his teaching to these elements: in the main we identify it with harder topics, especially with the saving significance of our Lord's Death. Yet we have no grievance to complain of owing to his introduction of these difficult matters of doctrine; no intolerable or needless yoke is prepared by him for intending believers. The crown and completion of Christ's Revelation of goodness appeared as a matter of fact in His Death, and it was impossible that this consummation should be left out of view by the apostle, or treated as if it were of subordinate value. An explanation of it in some detail was indispensable. For the religious consciousness soon demands some reasonable amount of assurance that a proposed method of pleasing God or attaining forgiveness shall be sufficient for its purpose. One needs to be convinced that the course one adopts is wise and right—needs to examine it, to look forward, and to see where it leads. We want peace with God, to dwell with Him in love, and to pursue a righteous life in dependence on Him. The ordinary man of honest mind would say, Be righteous, acknowledge God and do your duty, and it will be well with you in that case; you may then count on having the peace which is craved for and all the assistance you require. But if another path is advocated, namely, that of faith rather than obedience; if it is said that we are powerless to eradicate sin, but that nevertheless we may have peace and friendship with God provided we have faith, serious questions, such as have already been considered, must be raised. The thought of God's pure righteousness must bring up the question whether the load of sin could or ought to be ignored by Him, treated as if it did not exist, the moment faith is kindled in the soul. Thus the problem of the relation of faith to righteousness or law is soon raised by the

religious spirit; it is not started without cause by an apostle, or by the theologian who has a bent for speculation. The life and well-being of the soul are concerned in the matter; the whole worth of that salvation which is offered in the gospel is called in question. An explanation of the New Testament scheme, in which faith in the Son of God and in His perfect Redemption forms the principal part, was sure to be called for, especially by Jewish Christians, who had a clear perception of the claims and the majesty of Divine law; it is sure to be called for by ourselves, now that the sovereignty of law, moral and material, is so well understood. St. Paul gives the needful answer. According to him, there can be no thought of a perfect blessing in return for full obedience on our part,—for no one is thus obedient. But there can be a free gift of forgiveness when God graciously takes the initiative, manifests in His love the perfect righteousness which He requires of man, reveals it in the goodness which was consummated in the death of the sinless, loving Christ; and when He offers to bless with His peace those who have faith in that goodness, in Him who incarnated it, and who, in living union with Him and by the power He supplies, endeavour to grow into it themselves.

Repugnance to the doctrine of St. Paul is created when it is given out that, at the very origin of the religious life, all men require to accept his teaching on the subject of justification from sin through faith in the Redemption wrought by Christ in His death. But we observe that the apostle does not exact from all and sundry an immediate assent to what he gives forth at length in the Epistle to the Romans on this matter: in dealing with novices, he puts forward only what he finds to be essential in the first instance for salvation. Thus it is necessary for us also to

discriminate after his example, and not to try to impose in his name a burden which he would have been the last to approve. The personality of Paul is carefully studied at the present day; the influences, both Jewish and Greek, that contributed to form his thought, are analysed; the nature of his aim and work in life is borne in mind. He was above all things the missionary and the organiser of Churches, ardently bent on saving souls, and for this end studying to adapt his efforts to the clamant necessities of those with whom he had to do. His writings were thus occasional, not the product of one who sought in seclusion to form a rounded and finished system of truth for the world, but a series of expositions of the faith bearing on the pressing wants of special communities. In view of this fact, and of the whole complexity of the case, it is arbitrary and unwarrantable to select a part, even what may be regarded as the leading part of his teaching, as set forth in the Epistles to the *Galatians* and the *Romans*, and to insist on all people everywhere and at once accepting it, on the plea that before they do so, before they have recognised that the covering of Christ's blood is interposed for their protection, and have perceived how and why this is both necessary and sufficient, God cannot have any word of blessing or help to say to them. That would neither be to act in the spirit, nor literally to follow the example, of the apostle who made himself all things to all men.

On the other hand, it was needful that the work of salvation which Christ perfected on the Cross should be explained as it is by the apostle. It is often said that the teaching of Jesus Himself is simple and satisfying, and that we should abandon Paul therefore and go back to Christ. But the chief and complete Revelation made by Christ was supplied in His Death. And, as we have seen, He Himself could not fitly have expounded the import of that finished work before it was accomplished. Jesus

remains supreme, Divine: He accomplished the perfect work, was obedient unto Death. But it was for another to set forth the meaning of the glorious issue. Is it not well that we have such an interpretation of it? By all means let the truth and goodness brought to the world *by Christ* have the place of pre-eminence which is due. But let us not set aside the occurrence by which the Revelation made by our Lord was completed, nor let us undervalue the significance of that occurrence for mankind as presented by the greatest and most influential of Christ's apostles. The Crucifixion is the crowning event of history; all are vitally concerned in it; all need to go on to learn its meaning. There is cause for the greatest gratitude in the fact that the most spiritual man since the time of Jesus has expounded it. Though St. Paul was willing to lead his converts patiently into the truth, and had regard to the needs of particular Churches, he himself had a clear perception of that truth in its whole range: there was a great thought with which he was burdened, a gospel which he was burning to preach. He had a message which could be formulated in terms; and it was to the effect that legal obedience is vain and futile as a means of bringing peace, and that salvation is to be obtained only through the free grace of God fully revealed in the death of Christ. And law or free forgiveness was the alternative; no third course was possible or conceivable. His exposition remains for the guidance of Christendom in all time. There seems every reason to believe that the Crucifixion, involving as it did the whole counsel of God for man, could not, as an uninterpreted event, have fulfilled its purpose. If it had not been construed by a mind eminently gifted and specially inspired, egregious errors must inevitably have been incurred and persisted in; for how, on a subject so profound, were they to be avoided or overcome? Even as it was, with all the elucidation afforded by the apostle, the

Church gave forth some very strange theories on the Atonement; and to this day many people are apt to trust, in a way which leaves the soul dead and the life empty of good, in the perfect work which Christ is held to have done for them. Where the significance to thought is disregarded, where there is only a vague feeling cherished that the whole work of salvation and the whole responsibility for one's future may be committed to Christ, where there is no desire or attempt to realise the situation with all the clearness of mind that is attainable, and to shape the practical moral life in accordance with that light, self-delusion and incalculable loss will be the result. If such evils as these frequently occur, even when the corrective as set forth by St. Paul's exposition is available, what would they not have been had we not possessed it? As it is, we are in the happy position that though errors are committed, a closer investigation and a better use of the means afforded in the New Testament Epistles will guide us back to the truth.

It may be said, Do people as a matter of fact find the teaching of St. Paul clear and conclusive, when they do have recourse to it and give diligent heed to it? Does it fulfil its promise? The fact that there have been theories of the Atonement in great variety, and that there still are many strenuous attempts to grasp the meaning of it, to make it intelligible and real for these latter-day adherents of Christianity, shows that the apostle who interprets the finished work of Christ needs himself to be interpreted. What is to explain the explanation? Now, according to St. Paul himself, there are two leading means available for enabling people to clear up their religious difficulties; one of them being a special power from God, the other a power which is permanently possessed by man himself. First, the Spirit of Christ is given to men, and not without effect or for nothing. As we are taught by St. Paul, Christ is

exalted, a living power active in the world, blessing the members of the Church with gifts adapted to them. There is a Spirit, then, in the Christian community still, teaching men truth and righteousness and mercy in ever increasing measure; and people should see anew for themselves how the principles underlying the Atonement, *e.g.*, are in accordance with that light from God which is advancing among them, and which is indeed the best they know. And accordingly history shows that the moulding influence of the Holy Spirit in Christendom has had the effect that the successive theories of the Atonement have become more and more ethical: there is an enormous advance in this direction, as we pass from the early theory of a ransom paid by the death of Christ to Satan, to the newer conception of a full vindication of that righteousness which is eternal and Divine, and which is declared to be such to the human soul. In the next place, the apostle exhorts people to exercise their own God-given powers of mind. Like his fellow-apostle Peter, he would say that they ought to be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh them a reason concerning the hope that is in them. For he strongly approves of the deliberate use of the understanding for purposes of interpretation, setting much more value on it than on miraculous but obscure spiritual gifts. If this employment of the understanding was a duty and privilege in the first age of the Church, it cannot be safely put in abeyance at any subsequent period. It can never be wise or right to give all one's serious thoughts to what is of the earth. There is, according to Paul, a place for *Gnosis* in Christianity. We are bound to seek truth, reality, and righteousness in religion, as distinguished from mere fiction, dense obscurity, or apparent injustice. In this quest the known has to be used to explain the unknown: we follow the same procedure which takes us to truth and reality in all other fields. The product of Christianity in

one sphere is taken to interpret Christian truth in another and higher sphere, the root-principles being the same in both cases. There are means afforded, especially the teaching of St. Paul, to enable us to gain a true knowledge of salvation through the Cross, and we must not overleap the means and rest in our own reason, sustained by the inner light of the Spirit alone. The Spirit works through the means. Paul cannot be superseded: we are both consciously and unconsciously formed by his teaching, and cannot escape it, since it enshrines the truth. But we require the light of God, as given in our own time, to enable us to make Paul's thought our own, to revive and apply it. There is truth in a saying which has been attributed to the late Bishop Westcott, to the effect that people cannot think each other's thoughts: they can only think their own. "You cannot think St. Paul's thoughts or Isaiah's. What I can do is to try to get a sort of proportion from them. St. Paul thought the thoughts of a man of the first century. You must think your own by the teaching of the living Spirit." But if the Atonement is explained to us in the last resort only through what the Spirit of Christ has taught ourselves, *i.e.* through the best that is realised in human practice in the Christian world of our day, this means that Christ is made His own interpreter, and that we have faculties and experience which fit us, so far as they are rightly used, to apprehend the highest truth of Christ: in His light we see light.

The following additional paragraphs have reference to the value of St. Paul's life and thought for present guidance:—

(1) There is no necessity for beginning one's life of faith by learning of St. Paul, and there is no possibility of doing so if it is found that his teaching cannot be assimilated. The teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels

includes much that is very simple, especially on the Fatherhood of God, and on the duty and blessing of returning to the Father in penitence and trust, and of seeking, in dependence on Him, to fulfil the laws of His kingdom. We ought not so to follow the leading of the apostle as to put the first fresh message of Jesus the Master in the background, or out of view altogether. The person who accepts in practice the simpler announcements of Jesus, is surely striving to enter the Christian fold by "the door."

(2) We have not a St. Paul speaking directly to ourselves of the miraculous vision which he witnessed, and speaking, too, as one who believed that the end of the world was at hand. The effect of his utterances on those who are as yet destitute of Christian faith is necessarily altered in the lapse of time, and with changed habits of regarding the world and natural law. It is a different thing to hear, in a comparatively primitive age, of Christ's appearing, from the person to whom He appeared, and to do so under advanced conditions of the world, nearly two thousand years after the event. It is reasonable to believe that the apostle, who made himself all things to all men, would have allowed for that difference as for others.

Besides, as the prophets in Old Israel required to be tested by an investigation of the message they delivered (Deut. xiii. 1 ff., xviii. 20), and were accepted or rejected according as they supported or opposed the known righteous commandments of God, so, if the declaration of St. Paul regarding his vision is to be more than the announcement of a meaningless portent, this must be because of the *valuable truth* which is connected with it. There must be moral or spiritual truth conveyed, which we can apprehend and appreciate, which is related to existing religious convictions, and carries faith up to a greater height, enlarging the mind's view of God and of His ways with man. Thus only is there a true *Revelation* brought to us through St.

Paul, a real illumination of the spiritual and moral world. Antecedent beliefs on our part regarding God, the earthly Jesus, sin, etc., are implied, unless there is to be only a blind, and therefore a comparatively unprofitable, acceptance of St. Paul's statements.

(3) An experience, which in many respects resembles that of the apostle, occurs in the case of many Christians in modern times, whose religion amounts to belief in God, an endeavour, necessarily very imperfect, to obey His holy will, and a repetition of prescribed observances—church-going, attendance at Sacraments, formal assent to a creed, etc.—which partake largely for them of the nature of mere ceremonies which are sanctioned by custom, and the spiritual purpose of which is not perceived. As *Jewish* ceremonies were valueless to the awakened conscience of the apostle, and could not take away sin, the same result naturally occurs from the repetition of *Christian* practices when these are merely external observances. There is the same impelling necessity, as in his case, to learn the full Revelation of God's holy and merciful will in the Cross of Christ, and thereafter to use the law and the ordinances of the Church with understanding and profit. Masses of professing Christians have thus much to learn from St. Paul. Protestants, in particular, cannot forget that the Reformers were very largely influenced by him. They found that a ceremony authorised by the Christian Church may be only a lifeless *opus operatum*, and that justification is by the living faith of the soul. At present, Christians who realise the Protestant principle find that they are urged anew to set forth the Person of Christ as the object of saving faith, and to exhibit ecclesiastical doctrine as an expression of the precious life-giving truth revealed in Christ.

(4) St. Paul's Epistles vary from each other, being occasional, or having regard to the position and circum-

stances of those to whom they were addressed. There was no formulation of doctrine elaborated by him in detail and sent round to each of the Churches, so that it might be accepted by them as "the truth." Seeing that variation is so far allowed by him in principle, it may be held that it would be in conformity with his thought and practice if religious truth were still presented so as to be suited for the capacity of those who receive it, provided that the end and ultimate aim in each case is to declare the full gospel of Christ in sincerity.

## PART V

### DEVELOPMENT OF RESULTS

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#### CHAPTER XVI

##### RIGHTEOUSNESS EMPHASISED

FORGIVENESS, as we have already had occasion to observe, is not granted either by God or man except to one who seeks righteousness, who is manifestly resolved to act forthwith as an undoubted law declares he ought to do. That person alone can expect to be forgiven who sincerely intends henceforth to obey where he has previously come short. The Revelation in Christ's death took place that men who sorrow for sin and long for righteousness in themselves might have the peace of forgiveness and might learn the duty of obedience on their own part, and be stirred up to the fulfilment of it. There can be no ground for glorying, whatever Christ was or is seen to have been, if wickedness still has full scope in one's own life. Can the man who is indifferent to his own sin rightly glory because Christ was entirely good? There have been those who have tried to concentrate their thoughts for many hours or even days on this topic of the Cross, believing that, as it is so pre-eminent in significance, they are doing God service. What other object of contemplation, they

would say, is comparable to it? Many have formed the impression that Christianity demands this persistent meditation on Christ's Cross, as they recollect how St. Paul gloried in it alone (Gal. vi. 14). How many a devotee, keeping a crucifix at hand, does all he can to preserve the memory of it unbroken; and how the Revelation in our Lord's death has often been represented by Protestant teaching itself as the whole of the Christian Revelation. Yet they feel that they are not equal to this demand, and suspect, moreover, that, after all, such devotion tends to become formal and unfruitful, and is not morally justifiable. And this must be admitted by us, in accordance with their conviction, that if a very long time is spent in meditating on the death of Jesus, the occupation, as a rule, would soon be little else than dreaming, or the repetition of a spiritless form like any other *opus operatum*. Much more benefit is derived if there is a brief but earnest lifting up of the soul to the perfection of goodness which is discerned in our Lord's death; and if, as the direct consequence, there is an honest and sustained endeavour to perform one's own lawful and pressing tasks in the world. As we see from the whole situation of one who earnestly desires forgiveness, the immediate aim must be that the righteousness we have looked upon may be reproduced in us, that by doing good we may overcome the world with Christ, instead of letting the world overcome us, and losing the glory we have seen and fondly imagined we possessed. It is not needful that there should be very lengthened meditation every day on this crowning Revelation of God, that there should be very prolonged or ecstatic inward gazing on the spectacle of our Lord's Cross; indeed, as a rule, such a course would be positively harmful, all moral meaning being eliminated from such devotion, and there is an imperative religious summons to restrict the time so spent. For one cannot look to good purpose on the things of God, cannot look in the spirit of

prayer and earnest piety, except so long as God gives that spirit; and, as a rule, it is not given for long on any single occasion. Soon the thoughts wander and get confused, or listlessness sets in. That should be the sign that after fervent meditation one is called away to active, righteous work, or to faithful endurance (p. 108). Thus, when the meaning and purpose of the Cross are apprehended,—its significance in relation to forgiveness,—one's practical thought of it from day to day can be properly regulated, and there is no abuse or empty sentimentality such as our moral nature resents; the way is open for that devotion which is fruitful of the greatest righteousness.

Furthermore, with such Christian faith and righteousness there is genuine happiness combined, and he who feels it will not exhibit the gloomy aspect which is often supposed to be inevitable in the votaries of the Cross. Here, again, we have to recollect the position of the person who is forgiven. He has the most cheering experience that man can know. He is not troubled, as the irreligious man is liable to be, with the sense of unconfessed sin, of his culpable disregard of the true ideal for man or the chief end of life; often he can say with truth that he has no burden of pain to take up. He is conversant with absolute goodness; he is disposed to accept with relish any natural earthly joy, and is frequently stirred up to utter thanks and praise to the bountiful Giver. Often, in the good Providence of God, such person has complete peace with his Maker, the world, and himself, and is the conscious recipient of the love of the heavenly Father. And he is convinced that Christ will be glorified and His cause advanced if the peace and the comforts of faith are manifested by him to others, and if these are persuaded that Christianity has refreshing gifts without number to bestow.

But the question arises, Is such apprehension of Christ as the average person can hope to attain calculated in very deed to improve a man's conduct, and thereby to increase his joy in life? Often it seems to the sober judgment a task of the utmost magnitude, one which is practically hopeless, to alter for good a person's habits and character. A temporary change of custom is easy, but a lasting improvement of the essential self appears to be all but impossible. Schopenhauer, seizing on this common pessimistic conception of our nature and our prospects, sought to add the sanction of philosophy to it, holding, as he did, that the constitution of each person is a *datum* which must be accepted as it stands; that the native impulses which shape the character are unalterable: there may be trifling refinements, but a thorough renewal or any substantial reformation of the life there cannot be. However, it will be admitted that true, shining, moral worth, as it has frequently been exhibited by men in history, is at least something glorious, which all men, being of like passions with the best of the race, can meditate upon and aspire to; there is nothing to compare to it for absolute excellence and desirability. Any person, if he chooses, can recall it habitually and sincerely, at least for some moments, day after day, as the chief object to be sought in life, and on many the obligation to seek it exerts a steady pressure from which they cannot escape. It was one of Goethe's maxims, that "every man has enough power left to carry out that of which he is convinced." If this elemental power of choice is exercised, the effect inwardly and outwardly must in course of time be marked and decisive. A man's moral nature is transformed by what he most admires and continues to admire; the chief love of the heart makes him what he is in all essential respects. When he persistently contemplates and desires the best that is discernible, there is a slow, progressive growth in

actual goodness, and there are also critical stages where a wise decision results in a more rapid advance and a pronounced confirmation of the character. A comparison which should be helpful in this connection has already been adduced (p. 23). Within the secular sphere there is a continuous, imperceptible, but very real and ultimately thorough change in a person's ideas, aims, and actions as he passes from childhood or boyhood, with its youthful delight in toys and play, to the mature period when duty itself is his pleasure. The alteration in the mind caused by the voluntary direction of thought and desire to manly pursuits is accompanied by a corresponding change of action; the total complexion of the outward life becomes different from what it once was. The progress from day to day may have been insensible, but the issue is vast and at length irreversible. There is a similar transformation of a far-reaching kind when the nature of Christ is habitually envisaged in its ideal merit and spiritual glory; His image and righteousness is in process of time stamped indelibly on one's being, and the effect is made apparent by countless subtle traits in all one's conduct and habits. It is true that new powers of a higher order are called into requisition in this moral and spiritual process, but in itself it is hardly more strange than the other process of growth and radical transformation which has been referred to, and which, as one of the most familiar facts of observation and experience, must be admitted by all. At all events, there is no warrant for maintaining that man's essential nature is unchangeably settled *ab initio*. Next, as has been indicated, sudden emergencies of critical import often occur in worldly life, and these may be made to serve the purpose of moral renovation. An instant call to stern duty is heard. Whatever the risk, the person who has made the highest righteousness the chief object of desire, spurred as he is by the combined force of many reflections and resolutions

in the past, will spring forward at the call, when he would otherwise, without that cultivation of his better spirit, have faltered and drawn back. At least, though there may be failures, in some cases inexcusable and lamentable enough, there will be many a worthy response due to the cause here specified. And on each occasion when the path of honour is chosen, the character is strengthened, till at length it becomes immovably fixed, is determined for the good alone. In this way, and in this way alone, that consummate power is gained which will enable one to face with a right spirit and settled resolution any ordeal to which in the providence of God he may be called (cf. Wordsworth, "The Happy Warrior"). Not by haphazard procedure, or by depending merely on one's native endowments, can this highest achievement of all be reached. Here, if anywhere, by the law of causality, there must be discipline; but here, as elsewhere, discipline tells. Where heart, mind, and life are exercised, and where the training involves as its primary essential sincere devotion to ideal goodness and to the glory of the Cross, all our observation and experience and the judgment of reason teach us that the result will be the formation of a new man after the likeness of Christ.

And it is not merely at some remote period in the future that the gain which has been alluded to will be realised: there is immediate ground for enthusiasm, and there is an immediate stimulus to earnest action. Not only can thought be fixed on the worthiest object, and the heart be forthwith delighted by the recognition of its loveliness, but the pursuit of the same reality in worldly life is attended with a lofty joy, and is indeed the only occupation that dignifies and glorifies our existence, and makes us contented and happy. What makes a man lose all zest in life is the knowledge that he has not discovered a great object for his aspiration, and identified himself with

it. Give him enough to do in the shape of work that is suitable for him, worthy of his best endeavours, and which his heart acknowledges to be the most important that he can accomplish, and he needs no other pleasure or reward. Give him the whole world without such occupation, and he is miserable. But what pursuit is worthy to engross our full powers? Multitudes imagine it is that which consists in acquiring riches and honour merely. That, however, is but to gain the world, which, as has been said, is disappointing at the best. The acquisition of the good things of earth is indeed a right and necessary aim, but still one which ought to be regarded as only secondary; what is thus obtained is but a means to a higher end. An object which the heart acknowledges to be entirely worthy and stimulating is pursued only when one fights in dependence on God against his personal sin, and proceeds to do good to mankind in the way which his means and endowments determine as the most fitting for him. Now, to do righteousness in one's own limited sphere, to resist all evil, to seek the good of those around one,—in short, to be Christ-like,—this task, while affording scope for the most talented of mankind, is open to those who possess any inferior measure of endowments. When anyone adopts this mode of living, God's idea of him is being fulfilled. The plan is carried out which the individual, with his special bent and peculiarities, is designed to realise. Such person gains the conviction that by Divine grace he is fulfilling God's intention, and that his life is thus devoted to the very best purpose. He is now conversant with greatness; his mind is moving among the most exalted things; he is assured that there cannot be a better scheme of life for him than that which his Maker framed and now discloses, and that in giving effect to it he has espoused the very greatest cause. Such happiness and confidence are secured as all the world could not impart.

The same essential type exists in everyone who actively responds to the religious and moral obligations resting on him, and worthily takes up his personal cross. There are not two types or standards of genuine goodness ; there is only one. By crucifying self and sin, and obeying each heavenly vision, a person in any sphere, high or low, finds the chief good, enters on the worthiest and most ennobling career, as God and man and nations testify, and as his own heart would assure him. He would have the blessing whether others knew or not. St. Paul and the later Christians were great, and were gladdened by virtue of what they were in themselves in the sight of God and of their own heart, not from what was thought or said about them. And so, by taking up one's personal cross and following Christ in the sphere assigned by Providence, one obtains even in this present time what is most worth having, what is the most glorious possession of all, and what would be so described by those who truly knew all ; and one's happiness would not be much affected by anything that men might say or do.

The matter of cross-bearing has been dwelt upon here, because any view of the Atonement which lays stress on the personal benefit of peace and comfort for the soul as the principal consequence of the Redemption from sin which has been wrought through Christ, and does not make plain the possibility and the necessity of attaining true righteousness, is palpably defective. The honest, ingenuous mind approves of a vigorous attempt at self-improvement apart from conscious religion, as morally superior to an unfruitful faith. But from the first we recognised that the soul that returns in true penitence to God is strongly bent on attaining righteousness (pp. 87, 96 ff.). Throughout its progress faith has great moral content (p. 259). Forgiveness from God liberates the powers of the sincere believer, and sets him for the first time in the

way of realising his greatest moral possibilities (p. 224). Whatever blessing is involved in forgiveness must, as heart and reason testify, be forfeited and cast away by the person who still purposes to disregard the loftiest claims of morality, or to make these subordinate to any worldly or selfish aim.

## CHAPTER XVII

### CHRISTIANITY AS A GOSPEL FOR THIS MODERN AGE

THE Life of Faith in which one has peace with God, and growth in personal righteousness, together form the chief good, in possession of which one is abundantly blessed, and without which one may be said to have nothing though he owned all riches. Thus Christianity is a gospel for every age, and in particular for this age in which men crave so eagerly for what is good, and are dispirited because they cannot find it, or because only a miserably small amount of it is grasped. There is in the existing circumstances an eminently favourable opportunity for the propagation of a gospel that is "good news" indeed. But one indispensable condition is that it must be capable of being apprehended in this modern period. A "gospel" that stands apart from the current of life, and eludes all thought, conveys no "news." It must commend itself as suited for the mind of the age, as simple in the best sense, as that gift of God which can be brought down yet to any honest and good heart, in order that such heart may be benefited forthwith, and may in due time be enlarged and taken up to the height of heaven.

The reference to the present age leads us to revert to a former age, in which the course of procedure in laying hold of the gospel message was definitely settled, and was considered to be plain. The gospel, identified with the Atonement made in Christ's Cross, was held to be simply

the gift of salvation through the substitution of the crucified Christ as a ransom for sinners. These last had only to repent and lay hold of the gift by faith. The believer's thought was directed to a Court of justice and to the Judge who administers the law: in a kind of spiritual Court, Christ by His death paid the full penalty for man's sin, and set the sinner free (cf. p. 215). Now this "forensic theory, vital as were its faults, was phenomenally simple and intelligible" (Sir Edward Russell, *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1904, p. 246). The writer just quoted adds that now "laymen cast away the forensic theory as condemned; they ignore the later theories as incomprehensible." These statements are undoubtedly true. In the traditional theory, the position of man relatively to God and Christ, and the process of Redemption from beginning to end, could be distinctly pictured in the mind by any person. One saw, as it were, the interior of the Court, and followed the brief but infinitely momentous procedure. But when that theory is discarded, as it has to be discarded, especially in view of the strong emphasis now laid on the Fatherhood of God, there is no other to replace it which can be succinctly stated, and is felt to represent the actual situation. No other theory springs up before the mind, and claims acceptance with constraining effect. In the new situation, there appears, therefore, to be a huge obstacle to faith. In place of clearness and simplicity we have the blackness of darkness, or else laboured expositions which remain vague and inconclusive, which fail to represent the fulness of the gospel, and none of which commends itself to any large body of professing Christians.

But, after all, it may well be said that, among the faults of the old theory, there was this one in particular, that it was *dangerously* simple. The natural effect of it was that the perfect gift of God to man, full and final salvation, was very often understood to be attainable by assenting

to a short formula. There was no sufficient guarantee that the heart, the deeper life of the man, was involved. So simple was the theory, that one might readily feel he could "accept" it instantaneously at any period of life. The further inference was at once suggested, that all serious thoughts of religion might safely be deferred till one's latest years. Thus the theory was calculated to impair the religion. If so, its disappearance is no loss. And substantially the same objection would apply to any other theory of the Atonement, when it is given out that the "acceptance" of the theory secures the coveted and indestructible blessing. Any theory can be accepted in a comparatively brief space of time, if it can be accepted at all. And the eternal issues of life are in effect represented as depending on an exercise of the understanding which may be only formal, in which the governing will of the man is in no wise concerned, in which no true repentance or change of heart is implied, and no breaking of habit—that habit which time confirms, and ere long settles almost irrevocably.

But now, without putting in the forefront a theory of any kind on the Atonement, and without entailing such risk as has been indicated from the advocacy of a theory, we may yet declare a simple gospel which the mass of men in these times can sincerely take home to themselves. The heart that has not been long or excessively hardened can be given unreservedly to God, and to that goodness which is apprehended for the time being. Reason and conscience warrant and demand this act. No hard matter beyond one's power to grasp is inculcated; rather, truth as brought to view by the light that is in one, and which the race of men, with few exceptions among individuals, have acknowledged in all lands, presses for recognition. The simplicity and clearness are once more "phenomenal." That, indeed, was a feature of Christ's Galilean gospel: it

was marked by a Divine simplicity. No barrier in the shape of conditions was set up; man in his need as a prodigal was invited to return to his Father. But, as of old, what is now offered must be not only simple, capable of being easily and firmly grasped, but must be of felt and supreme value, a real *gospel*. And, accordingly, rich spiritual blessings from God are to be gained without delay by the heart that begins to have faith; Heaven's best gifts are in large measure vouchsafed. Man craves much and he receives much. The intense longing for true friendship and love is satisfied; the deep void in the heart is filled. One has the sense that God is his friend, that therefore he will not be in want, and that, if he is true to the light that is in him, no adverse power in the universe will be able to do him real harm. A victorious passion for righteousness is forthwith engendered; a high and captivating aim in life is clearly discerned and even begins to be attained. Thus the whole outlook over the world and the whole prospect in life is changed for the better. After night the day has returned; the coming of God is the coming of hope. The simplicity which has to be emphasised in the process does not imply meagreness in the results. There is nothing to cause disappointment; on the contrary, there is a celestial fulness in the wealth which is opened up. Corresponding to the remarkable simplicity of the gospel is its astonishing power to yield abundance of precious blessings. In short, there is a good held out by our religion which is at once perfectly simple, level to the apprehension of everyone, and of immediate and unequalled value.

At the same time, it is plain that the friendship with God must be maintained unbroken, if these happy consequences are to be preserved. Throughout the life that remains, there must be entire willingness to learn of God and to follow in the way which is prescribed by His Spirit; indeed, wilful neglect or opposition would now be specially

heinous, as being a sin against light. However, this continued choice of the spiritual career is no hardship, but a felt privilege and blessing, meaning as it does the perpetuation and increase of the chiefest joys. The danger of formality or utter sterility which was alluded to, resulting from the mere acceptance once for all of a stereotyped theory of the Atonement, is obviated.

Indeed, the spiritual blessings of the gospel which may reasonably be anticipated at the present time are immeasurable: there is reason to regard them as corresponding in vastness to the results of contemporary science, and even as excelling these. The great intellectual epochs of the past culminated in spiritual growths, which eclipsed them and conferred still greater benefits on the world than those which were of a purely intellectual or secular kind. "First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." The reason in history, true to itself, may be taken as working through the recent scientific revival up to a spiritual revival which is in prospect and is actually under way, and which will ultimately be more fruitful of blessing than the other. There is much evidence available to convince us that, if the simple spiritual realities of Christianity are laid hold of, as they commend themselves to the modern mind, and if the truth is persistently followed out and applied in practice, an amount of blessing will be reaped even in the present life which far excels all that has hitherto been experienced. We are encouraged by the remembrance of what has occurred again and again in ages gone by. The striking secular achievements in history have been prognostications of such as were spiritual, moral, and social, and were stepping-stones to these last. Moses, *e.g.*, was first equipped with all the learning of the Egyptians. But had this been his sole distinction, his name would long ere now have been forgotten. To his contemporaries in Israel, how-

ever, and to their spiritual successors ever after, he became known as the giver of the moral law and as the instrument of Revelation. The previous learning had been valuable in itself, but still more as a discipline preparing for what lay beyond itself; and, having served its purpose, it vanished from the world's thought, and the greater moral and religious outcome alone commanded enduring attention. Again, Greek science and philosophy, with its independence and originality, its many-sidedness, thoroughness, and brilliance, has been a lasting wonder to the world. But the time of decadence ensued, and the age of light and of all-conquering reason became a golden memory only. Then that philosophical thought supplied forms for expressing and embodying the truths of the perfect religion, and in the shape of *Christian doctrine* it was rejuvenated as theological thought, and its life has been prolonged for some two thousand years. In this way what originally sprang from a higher species of curiosity only, such as Paul still found to be active at Athens in his day, and what was known only to the few in Greece who had leisure for lofty and subtle speculation, came to serve the greatest practical purpose of man, and was known and treasured by people of every class in all parts of the world. The spiritual outcome in Christian doctrine added the crowning glory to the product of Greek genius, rescued it from comparative oblivion, made it eminently fruitful, conferred on it long-continued and world-wide celebrity. Once more the *Renaissance* of the fifteenth century, lasting for some hundred years, led up to the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the former a general but comparatively tranquil stirring of thought and activity, the latter a veritable convulsion, affecting the most vital interests of mankind, and shaking the nations and all ranks in them accordingly, throwing men back on those first principles which regulate their religious and moral life, and determine their political

allegiance and stimulate their scientific activity. We come farther down, and find that German Idealism started towards the close of the eighteenth century with the question of the validity and extent of human knowledge, a purely intellectual topic. It was dealt with by a succession of renowned thinkers, and another Golden Age of thought arrived comparable to the best period of ancient Greek philosophy. But the result was a *Philosophy of Religion*, which has sufficed for many leaders of thought down to our own day as a means of proving that faith is reasonable, and that Christianity is the absolute religion. In all these cases which have been mentioned, the culminating *spiritual* issues have been supreme in importance, and they exert their influence with felt effect till the present hour.

Now, the outburst of scientific activity in the latter half of the nineteenth century resembles, in respect of the vast scope of the achievements, the secular growths just alluded to. The last century is already acknowledged to have been the wonderful century. It might seem comparable to the Renaissance; yet probably, with all its wonders, it is not equal to the Renaissance. No proper or useful comparison in detail can be made between the two periods. The Dark Ages preceded the Renaissance; the latter was like the day-dawn, which dispels the shades of night. But we could not say that the generations prior to the middle of the nineteenth century were immersed in intellectual darkness! Then the Humanities flourished, and were the instrument of mental discipline in the Renaissance; whereas, in the recent half-century, there has been a considerable aversion to this study and to philosophy, and science and history have risen to favour in place of these, and the results in many directions have been astounding. But though a comparison is of little value, we see at least that the enormous advance which has been made of late in a multitude of

special fields, and the whole change of thought and practice which has been brought about in consequence, mark a new intellectual epoch of the kind which is of far-reaching effect. In view of the fact that an altogether exceptional amount of mental energy has recently been expended, and has been directed with marvellous success into fresh and hitherto unexplored channels, it must be admitted that in these times the old order of things has changed very profoundly and extensively. Now, the evidence that is forthcoming from the past, leads to the expectation that a *spiritual* movement, corresponding to the purely intellectual, but surpassing it in magnitude and fruitfulness, is at hand or in progress. Indeed, the marvel would be if, in the present instance, the universal activity in the world had no decided and far-reaching effect in the sphere of religion. At least an opportunity of no ordinary kind is once more furnished.

And it cannot be said that an advance in the things pertaining to the spirit is uncalled for. All who set any value on religion and righteousness, see but too plainly what clamant need there is for such a spiritual movement as has been indicated. For, not to speak of heathen parts, Christendom itself is still very largely non-Christian, is dominated by a materialistic bent. Where is Christianity among us? it is frequently asked. There is need that the nominal should be a real faith; that it should be a power, and the ruling power, among the mass of its adherents; that it should bring to them, as with a full tide, the joy of a present salvation; that it should be the means of setting before them an entirely worthy object to live for, one which may be pursued in any circumstances; and that it should thus be made manifest that life in any station is a privilege and precious blessing. If real religion permeated the mass of the people in Christendom, much gladdening light would enter the minds of the existing generation; there

would be real enthusiasm and high hope; and so there would be much greater practical benefit for the lives of men than they have obtained, or can obtain, from material nature. The world would be effectually subdued, as it is not at present. Thus the higher good, which crowns that which is intellectual and material, can be seen in prospect; there is, moreover, an urgent demand for it; it is not merely what *might* be, but what *ought* to be, acquired. It is not borne in upon us by the unbridled imagination only; the attainment of it is enjoined by the imperious call of duty.

Our nature being a unity, the spiritual advance takes its character or complexion from the immediately preceding advance in the worldly sphere. More than four hundred years ago the study of the old languages and of the thought they embalmed was the principal means of awakening a new interest in man and in all that concerns him. There could not have failed to be fresh and independent inquiry regarding his chief interest, that of religion. The general stir of thought extended to matters of faith; and the printed translations of Scripture familiarised the body of the people with the new conceptions of Christianity. The Reformation was coloured by the *Humanities*,—it went as far as the mental training of the time, which was chiefly linguistic, permitted. But in the thought of that period there was a want of scientific method and historical criticism; and so, too, there was an arbitrary, subjective use of Scripture, exemplified in the most striking way by Luther himself. Again, the philosophical developments above referred to showed the influence of *Philosophy* continuing and very pronounced, when the transition was made to religion.

But in these latter days there is a craving for such reality, confidence, fruitfulness, hopefulness, in what concerns the religious life as we have been accustomed to

experience, through the application of modern methods, in the realm of physical nature. Men are impelled by the discipline of mind and life to which they have been subjected by science to call for positive, indubitable truth in their religion. They long to rest in spiritual facts which will be of boundless magnitude and of unequalled present value. And to secure the much-coveted gains in the latter domain, they are naturally and necessarily led to introduce as far as possible the methods which have been so successful everywhere else; for the Author of nature is the Father of spirits, and nature is a parable illustrating spirit. The things of faith are not forced on mankind; rather, by the help of stepping-stones supplied in natural life, people are led up to the largest and loftiest territories of the spirit that lie before them. While not forgetting the specialty of faith, and the truth that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, we may in several respects draw profitable instruction for our guidance in religion from the practice exemplified in the investigation of nature.

(1) God's works in the outside world have been so wonderfully interpreted and utilised because men went straight to the examination of these works themselves. They passed from what other people before them had said or written, and went out to the creation, using the hints and directions previously given, to inquire with their own eyes. The promising and effectual method is to handle and observe for one's self, to weigh and count and compare, and to experiment with the utmost patience. And as there is an ocean of marvels lying around the observer, he may well bring to light at any moment by the means referred to, and because he is engrossed with the very products of the Creator, some object or law never detected by man before; and it may be that with

good reason the whole civilised world will stand astonished. So much for pioneer work. But, further, every learner in the better class of educational institutions is now required to use the eye and the hand for himself, and not merely to hear or read or commit to memory descriptions of natural objects. The engineer, chemist, physician, astronomer, who had no practical training in his department of knowledge and art, would be regarded as alike ignorant and inefficient. Adequate knowledge is acquired in any branch of nature only when there is the vividness of perception, the certitude, which springs from personal manipulation of material objects, and from frequent observation of how they behave under one's hands. The novice in youth who seeks to have the requisite mental attainments in his chosen calling, must repeat, under guidance where it is necessary, the same process for himself which was originally performed by the leaders and pioneers, who groped their way unaided.

This fact teaches that in the case of the soul, in regard to that spiritual faculty which is one department of man's being, and which, as it is a reality in the world, cannot be viewed with indifference or passed over by the truth-loving mind, each person must take action for himself, so that he may know properly what manner of spirit he is of, and may be able to use his own religious talents to the best purpose. Our Lord and His apostles were the chief *Revealers* in this highest region; but all who come after them need to put their hand, so to say, to the same work. Here, just as in the case of the outer world, it is a poor thing to depend only on the sayings or writings of others. People are apt to be satisfied with merely listening to Christian teaching or preaching, or with committing to memory a Catechism, or parts of a Creed or of Scripture. The spiritual duty is supposed to be discharged when there has been this hearing, or when the memory-lesson

has been learned. But one like St. Paul, who longed that all might prophesy, would have said that the main thing to be desired as respects the edification of the soul is not yet begun or even attempted, if this is all. He would have said in effect, Go on to listen for yourself to your God. Be accustomed to go into His presence, to hear His will with you and to grasp His saving truth, so that it may make you a new man, leading you to fulfil the end of your being, to rise toward the full height of your possibilities, and to be both blessed yourself and a blessing to others. And there is great misgiving among the thoughtful at this day owing to the above-mentioned faulty method of appropriating the things of our religion. It resembles the antiquated system of lecturing on science, on the objects of nature, to those who simply listen, without proceeding to investigate those objects by using their own faculties. It is a very noticeable fact that in all other practical subjects, knowledge and skill are nowadays imparted by getting the learners to bring their own active powers to bear on the matters dealt with: the eye, the ear, the hand are trained, and become the means of training the mind. Where instruments are used—and in many cases instruments in great variety and of the finest mechanism are employed—one must not simply hear about them, but must at once begin to work them. And the rich and amazing results show that the course adopted is correct.

Now Christianity is a practical subject, if any subject is. In this respect there is a close resemblance between it and the branches of knowledge which have been alluded to. The difference, of course, is also great. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned: religion has, in so far, ways and means of its own, and is not to be ranked with common worldly sciences. Bearing this in mind, we may at the same time note the similarity. Religion has a practical aim; people are to be raised by it to their

best and happiest state. Hence those who are aware—as all are aware—of the successful methods in use at this day in the other practical fields, namely, in those which are of a secular nature, may well be strongly convinced that, while religion applies its own appropriate means, it is of the first importance here as elsewhere to recognise that the truth should actually be taken home by those who have to do with it, that it should really be made their own, understood, cherished for life, utilised for their own and others' well-being. The members of the Christian Church need to be induced to deal seriously, each one for himself, with the question of personal godliness. The minds of the laity need to be stimulated to independent activity in regard to the things of God, Christ, righteousness, and eternity, the things which most closely concern each one. As actual observation and experiment are indispensable but very effectual in assisting one to apprehend the processes of nature, personal religious experience is necessary, and is also on the human side sufficient, for enabling one to learn in a real and thorough manner the things of faith.

(2) Science seeks facts and laws, and determines to found its conclusions only on the firm base thereby attained. These facts and laws are reached by means of personal perception, tested by repetition and by an appeal, whenever it may be demanded, to the experience of others. So in Religion: personal experience, as has been said, is fundamental. But it must not consist of subjective fancies. It must rest on what is eternal and universal. Religious belief is gained by the individual through evidence which is conclusive to the judgment of his reason. But spiritual truth in the fulness of its contents has been imparted to the world in history,—through the souls and lives of men who have been

receptive of it. History supplies our most instructive and helpful facts. If the individual of to-day were entirely cut apart from his fellows in the past, the illumination available for him would be only a minimum. As it is, the portion of truth apprehended by him must be seen to harmonise with what has been communicated to men in the past—even with special Revelation. Thus, only by depending on that Revelation, and drawing continually from it, can the full wealth that is now attainable be acquired. To this end history has to be investigated, so that the higher life of its best men may be taken to mould and improve the lives of those who are now on the earth. And, in particular, Scripture has to be studied scientifically and historically, by means of linguistic research, literary criticism, and the laws of history, so that the truth it contains may be set forth in the lineaments it presented as a living reality of the past, and in the line of its development. Then it can be seen how the truth of Scripture is kindred with the spiritual product which is raised up in the man of to-day, forming with it, indeed, one species of life; and the latter is confirmed in his faith and has the means of deriving unlimited benefit from the full manifestations which God formerly made of His being and His will.

(3) We continually hear that we live in the Age of Criticism. In the worldly sphere, criticism serves the important purpose of ascertaining truth and exposing falsehood. All plausible propositions, it is true, are readily listened to; but they are acknowledged as statements of truth only when they have successfully endured the fire of criticism. The assertions when examined may prove to be totally destitute of evidence, to be groundless therefore, and deserving only to be set aside; or the evidence actually forthcoming may tell against them—may disprove

them. They are upheld as valid, as statements of fact, only when they have stood the test of an *experimentum crucis*. Now, in religion also criticism plays a conspicuous part. If personal experience in religion is imperatively called for, will there not be endless differences of view in matters of faith? If the faith of each is coloured by his own individuality, where is the unity of faith? It appears that religion would become, like a house endlessly divided against itself. Where would the truth be found, if the adherents of Christianity were all at variance with each other? In these circumstances, criticism, which is so often feared as if it were anti-religious in its tendency, will be acknowledged to serve a purpose of the first importance. When a vast multitude of persons allow free scope to their faculties even in the sphere of religion, many idiosyncrasies, whims, and even superstitions are certain to be fostered, and they may be propagated with the swiftness and devastating effect of an epidemic. The history of religion has much to tell on this head, even in the ages when the minds of individuals were on the whole kept powerfully in check by the authority of the Church. There must therefore appear to be great risk of hopeless division and error now, when the rights and duties of individuals are specially insisted on. But criticism has arisen at the same time to save the situation. We are delivered by it from superstition such as has oppressed many a soul in ages gone by, and from much vain speculation like that which vexed the Church for many centuries. There are short and easy tests now for every pretension of the kind. Whatever is eccentric, false, or baseless cannot stand a simple trial, and is thus prevented, as a rule, from showing itself or raising its head; or, if anything of the kind does come to the light, most people now, with the education that is possessed, have no difficulty in sweeping it aside. No counter-speculations need to be put forward: the assertions are simply tried,

criticised, and shown to be without foundation. On the other hand, the good or the true is promoted by searching trial. There is a goodness which commands the homage of the world, and which will not be moved by any efforts of men from its place of honour. It is approved by the reason, and men find that they live in deed and in truth by cleaving to it and to the God who includes and reveals it. True sayings, worthy actions, exemplary, high-minded persons, are discovered by searching, and their excellence is established by the closest scrutiny. Thus, too, the perfect goodness of Christ is manifested and confirmed. It is wholly fit for man and worthy of God, and nothing else that has been exhibited on earth satisfies this test. The individual is proved to be right when and only when in his life's practice his conclusions are in accordance with this perfect light of Christ which approves itself as such to every quickened conscience. Thus there is no evil occasioned by a general personal investigation of what pertains to the faith. Rather the object of faith appears as a living and indestructible reality; it remains as an exalted object for the devotion of all mankind, while there are endless applications in human experience of the truth which is common to all. The unity of the faith and the boundless fulness that is in Christ are both established to our minds. Criticism has thus the beneficial effect that the things which are shaken are removed, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain (Heb. xii. 27).

Christ invited His followers to exercise their own inquiring powers. He was not afraid of the diverging views which might thereby be occasioned. He did not lay down a creed, and press the disciples to accept it at all hazards in its entirety. He rather asked questions and uttered "hard sayings," at which many were offended, with the object of exciting personal attention and interest in spiritual things. "Whom say ye that I am?" He asked. "My

flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." Hard sayings, indeed; but the inquiry they stimulated, the act of coping with them, was calculated to awaken new life in men's souls. And St. Paul desired that all might prophesy, that each Christian might obtain a portion of good adapted to his own powers and circumstances, and might be able to utter forth for the edification of others what had been communicated to himself. Whereas the Church in later ages aimed at securing uniformity of belief and was satisfied when this was gained, or appeared to be gained, Christ and His apostles sought to stir up genuine spiritual life in individuals. This last was reckoned the great thing to be desired in the first and best years of Christianity: if only the minds of men were roused to independent activity, there was a glorious light of truth to be discerned, while the Person and goodness of Christ were still vividly realised among the Christian flock, which would establish unity amid all diversity and prevent hurtful error. Once more, in these latter days, the Person and goodness of Christ are brought conspicuously to view by means of reverent, historical inquiry, as they have never been since the days of the apostles. If, then, the private energies of individuals are once more stirred, as is manifestly fitting, especially when we remember how Christ Himself aimed at effecting that end, there is the same means as of old for keeping the peculiarities of individuals in check, namely, by adducing the sovereign and unquestionable excellence that is now to be witnessed in the nature of Christ, and applying this as the controlling standard.

(4) A further gain from the introduction of modern methods consists in this, that, as science is cosmopolitan, Christian faith is now viewed not only as a living, positive reality, an actual and valuable spiritual possession, but as

cosmopolitan likewise—as needed by all men, appealing to all, and suited for all; and, again, as infinitely expansive, of infinite promise. These characteristics, first witnessed and effectively brought home to us in science, *i.e.* as far as it is possible for the material objects of science to exhibit them, are found in turn to attach to religion, and here to meet with the amplest realisation.

Instead of viewing faith as a blind, unreasoning assent to religious propositions which only a comparatively few elect persons can be constrained to yield, and as a means only for gaining ineffable rewards in another world to come, as finished, too, at its commencement and manifesting neither life nor growth, we now regard it as a higher kind of life which all need and which all ought to realise in a large measure here and now, a life as much greater than that of the intellect as the latter is superior to the life of sense. Then, as a personal experience on earth, it extends indefinitely and is calculated to shape all experience. Faith in a creed is without much variety, but faith in a Person allows of unlimited variety and individuality in the class of spiritual people. Dead sameness passes into a world of life and diversity centred in unity. How real and fruitful has the life of the intellect been in recent generations! Religion *ought* to enter in the same way into the life of the mass of men; it *ought* to be the dominating power among them, guiding and subduing for its own supreme ends even the marvellous activity of the intellect. But in point of fact it has been cloudy in comparison, it has stood far too much apart from the world of actual existence, and has been involved in mystery and uncertainty. There has been a want of clearness and confidence of conviction, a want of power to gladden and satisfy the heart, a want of fruitfulness. How urgent, then, is the need of the summons to improve in these respects by calling into requisition the means and methods (with the adaptations demanded by

the special subject) which have approved themselves unmistakably in every other field of practice, and which are admittedly at home in the realm of faith itself.

An actual, positive good, and one which becomes truly satisfying, infinite in extent and value, is held out by the means in question to each and all. It is said that modern thought minimises Christianity, cuts and carves at the traditional body of doctrine till the doctrine is brought down within the compass of its feeble rationalising power; and again, that Protestantism, having emptied out the treasures of faith which were accumulated during many centuries, is prosaic and poverty-stricken compared to Roman Catholicism. When this is supposed, we have to recall the glory and the grandeur of the spiritual Christ, to reflect that it excels all that is visible as far as heaven transcends the earth, and to remember that each person may have the nature, principles, life of Christ as a present possession, and may and ought to develop the gift indefinitely. The finite spirit is thus in contact with the Infinite; God is in man, supplying him ceaselessly out of His perfect fulness. The unequalled riches of heaven being laid open for one's acceptance, how can it be said that only a meagre benefit is contemplated? And again, how great beyond conception would a community, a world, of such spiritually-minded persons be. Is that which is spiritual, above all, is the nature of God or Christ, to be pronounced unreal, unsubstantial, devoid of richness or fulness of life, or of anything, indeed, that heart could wish? Undoubtedly the antiquity and the visible pomp of a Church may come to be profoundly impressive to those who have been reared within its pale: there are numerous influences and associations which affect them both consciously and unconsciously, causing some of the tenderest chords of their being to vibrate; there is much in the gathered stores of tradition that speaks with moving power.

But, after all, it is only the virtue of symbols or shadows, which is chiefly significant as indicating the pre-eminent power of the eternal substance. When we can have the perfect good, why crave importunately for the inferior; when we have the full spiritual reality, why cry out for the pale image, especially when it would blind us to the nature and presence of the gift which is supremely desirable, and tends to make us exalt sense above spirit? In matters of faith we want boundless greatness, absolute completeness, without flaw or defect; and we want a true Catholicism. Only the goodness which is unseen and spiritual, and directly accessible to all, suffices for that demand. Thus a true man, one whose heart God has touched, and who has made Divine righteousness his choice, attracts and holds us far more effectually than any ceremonial can do: he manifests the satisfying blessing which we are searching for. Our Christianity sets open the way for each soul to the universal Father: the chief good is presented as a reality which may be immediately grasped, and an advance is made by many brethren towards an infinite goal which has been revealed, and has been prescribed for all mankind. In the case of each of the faithful, the imagination and all the faculties of the soul are fed continually from a source which is adapted to supply the various needs, although even the powers of the imagination are quite baffled by the inexhaustible fulness of the source. Thus, when the things that cannot be shaken remain, when the spiritual treasure and this alone stands fast, there is not only no diminution of the soul's possession, but rather the object of faith comes to be valued at its true worth; it is exalted as it never was before—even to infinity. A gain of enormous magnitude is registered.

But if all were to exert themselves in the spiritual sense, it might seem that there would be an unwelcome stir and

excitement everywhere. Why all that trouble and commotion, when things move on passably well as they are? To afflict one's soul by cherishing impracticable desires after perfection of thought and character, to consume one's private life by dragging religious matters into it, would be exasperating, an endless and intolerable burden! Religion, like other things, should be kept in its place: it has been declared to be an intrusion when religion seeks "to invade the sphere of private life." To very many it seems an offence when it is suggested that they should take the motives and principles of Christianity into their ordinary existence, as a working power there. In the Church at the recognised time—yes. But to apply one's thought and desire to the matter in seclusion, when none but God is near—this is an entirely different thing, needless and grievous.—One wonders what the *raison d'être* of the Church on this view is supposed to be, what its teaching is meant to effect. Surely it ought to stir up a Christian spirit in its members which will make them overcome the world instead of being overcome by it, a spirit which does not vanish as soon as they have passed outside the church's walls, but which will remain in them, and be further cultivated in the light of all their experience, and will bring forth fruit also for their own and others' benefit. Sensational stir there need not be: that is not to be desired, as it is apt to have injurious consequences, or the religion which is so fostered will probably be shortlived. There may not even be inward or outward disturbance: the great disturbance of life is due to the want of personal faith, and the implied unrest and hopelessness. Health, peace, hope are restored to the soul that commits its cause to the Father of spirits; and these gifts, and others like them, are not to be regarded as so many spectres to terrify the mind and hamper the life from day to day. They are far from being objectionable: they are supremely desirable. All the world

would be bathed in gladsome light for those who, by personal faith and endeavour, sought and possessed them. All would be said and done in the best way, if all people had the gifts in question; if the hearts of all were turned with ardent longing to the highest goodness, the goodness of God revealed in Christ, and if all followed after charity. Such a consummation does not imply that the current speech and common ways of people, so far as they are innocent, and kind and helpful for smoothing the course of earthly existence, should be in any way altered from what they now are. The Christian way in any instance is the helpful, the morally right, the cheering and merciful way. Not the express language of religion would be needful at all hours, but the beneficent fruits of religion. This speech of faith, since faith is a delicate product, would be reserved for the most part for the ear of God. In a society well leavened by the Christian religion there would be worldly talk and worldly action, but all informed and shaped by the spirit of Christ. Things that are of proved value are not turned upside down when there is universal love to God and man, and Christ indeed rules the world; there is rather an ushering in of that state of things which all men in their moments of clearest vision and holiest upward mounting long to see realised on earth.

At all events, those who profess Christianity frequently utter the desire that a general visitation of the Heavenly Spirit should be made to the hearts and lives of men. They sing hymns, or follow in their minds the sense of hymns, which call for the descent of the Holy Spirit with His manifold gifts on people in all parts, so that a needy world may be enlightened and substantially aided thereby. But we cannot have the Holy Spirit and those characteristic gifts without the faith and holiness in us—at least without the sincere desire for, and endeavour after, those spiritual possessions. This general request, this

common utterance in Christian songs, of the petition for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, implies that it is considered needful that people everywhere should themselves pursue the righteous, holy ends that are in conformity with the mind of Christ, and so prove in the only way in which it can be done, that they have the gift of His Spirit. But what a contradiction to crave for the Spirit, and to think it strange and undesirable that the signs and fruits of that Spirit's presence and operation should be apparent in every class of people, and as far as possible in every individual! Sometimes there are Christian Conferences for the purpose of joining in supplication to God for a liberal gift of His Spirit, in order to recall men in this worldly age to their chief end here. This is well; yet one feels that something like a miracle is contemplated of the old, plain, and palpable kind, such as we have no reason now to expect. God is indeed to be approached as the source of this and every good gift. But men are then to be taught and exhorted that they have the duty and call to lift their desires to heaven, and to discover and fill out in actual fact the special pattern of manhood which God has in view with them severally. Then, and then only, the Spirit of all holiness has been given and has come to dwell in them. What more or better could the Spirit give than such a rightly ordered soul and nature in men; and what would the gift of the Spirit be worth without that inner renovation of people themselves? There is no miracle needed, though God is invoked and His action is necessary. Man has to work together with God, using all available means both natural and spiritual. Thus no fanatical or undesirable issue is contemplated, but only one which is in every sense beneficial. And all people are highly honoured by the requirement which is made, by the call to this spiritual career: all are viewed as possessing a faculty which could take them up to the heights of heaven; not one of them is belittled.

(5) The function of the *Christian Ministry* would be set in a clear light, and the true value of the ministry would be made apparent, if, in accordance with the cosmopolitan character of Christianity, religious experience were general or universal among men. On a superficial view, it is true, it might be supposed that if the multitude had the life of religion begun in them, there would be no place for teachers or preachers of the Christian faith ; they would no longer be required, for they would only be pressing people to take what they already possessed. (Cf. Rothe's conception of the final prospect for the Church.) But let us take illustrations ; and first, from the subject of Medicine. All must attend to their own health ; and yet it is not enough, though they do. Very often special skill must be called in. But it is well understood, if that skill is to be of any avail, not only that the prescriptions given have to be carefully carried out by the sufferer, that there must be active co-operation on the part of the patient with his medical adviser, that the former, having a lively interest in his own recovery, must do as best he can what he is recommended to try, but also that there are elementary, lifelong duties in the case resting upon him, which are of the very first significance. If these last are neglected, all the skill and resources that exist would be applied in vain—utterly thrown away. One must take food and sleep, must work and rest, must have sufficient clothing, and must obey at least the plainest laws of sanitation. He must see to these things all his days for himself. If he does this, if he attends to himself, fulfilling these and other such primary laws of health, and yet falls into sickness, it is a suitable case for the introduction of skilled assistance. But if there is entire neglect of the personal duty, if the common daily obligations referred to are wilfully disregarded, it is not a case for the application of special medical aids. They would be wasted, or worse than wasted. The man in

trouble is foolish, or grossly at fault, and some constraint is called for, or some severe penalty in the course of nature will soon be inflicted. We see here that the higher educated insight, the authoritative direction, likely to result in benefit, is for those, and those only, who are alive to their own need, and do their part in the matter with felt and continued interest. Those who are passive or neglectful in what falls to them to accomplish, are not fit subjects for such treatment. So, again, a law-abiding country like our own has a large number of busy lawyers. It might be said, Does a law-abiding people need them, and can they be employed in such a peace-loving community? Now it is there, and there alone, where they are needed, and can be usefully employed. If a district is disturbed, lawless, or rebellious against the existing government, the common law and the crowd of its interpreters are for a time set aside, and another system is put in operation. Martial law is introduced. Suspected persons are placed under supervision or banished from the country, or other severe measures may be taken with them as may be deemed expedient by those in power; and there is no appeal to any Court of justice, as there is in untroubled times. The smooth and equitable machinery of the law, then, with its public pleadings, with its appeals to statutory enactments, to the sense of justice or to the intelligence of juries,—all this is for a people who are loyal, who are in their own practice on the side of law, genuine supporters of it both in intention and in deed.

In like manner, it is when professing believers seek for themselves to do what they can to gain health of soul, to feed themselves daily with the Bread of heaven, to obtain that rest for the soul which is the reward of sincere faith, to be clothed with the robe of new righteousness, and to be pure in heart within,—it is then that the higher means provided in the gospel will serve for good. The end in

view and the duty imposed is to have the mind and nature of Christ reproduced in one's self; and what a task that is! Only the uninstructed person or the novice could think it light and quickly to be accomplished. It is only after a length of time and the use of all available means that the true and exacting nature of the task is understood, not to speak of the fulfilment of it which is in waiting. The mind and soul are more wonderful than the body, the former being kindred with God Himself, connecting man, as the body does not, with what is heavenly and eternal. If this is remembered, it will not be thought that, were men in general to enter on the Christian course, their religious wants and infirmities would be there and then removed, and that they would be beyond the need of earthly assistance. The *Pilgrim's Progress* has another tale to tell.—So again, if the Law of God is honoured by the mass of men, if heart and conscience are deeply impressed by it, and there is a true desire to give effect to it, the announcement of the gospel message then serves its purpose; God's readiness to forgive is heard of by those who are in need of the message; they are moved to respond by the felt craving for deliverance and rest. The declaration of the gospel with its mercy is precisely for those who come over in their heart and desire to the side of Divine law. The proclamation of the gospel, with its boundless fulness and innumerable applications, would never be more in place than when men in the mass turned of themselves to God their Father.—Of old, when Israel was faithful, the nation had Lawgivers, Judges, Psalmists, Prophets, and Priests. There was a stated order and solemn ceremonial, so long as there were hearts receptive of the proffered benefit. It was a *pious* people, that needed the orderly means of grace, and had those means preserved to them. But when they forgot God, or rebelled and turned away from Him, the regular services were not

continued for them: the people were given up to their enemies, the very Temple was destroyed, and the chosen race was made and kept subject to the heathen.

If the dead weight of custom were overcome among us, and if such spiritual activity as has been indicated were everywhere under way, there could not be better or more engrossing work than that of helping it forward. Even the possibility and prospect of starting it, though it were only in some instances, is fitted to fire the soul with ardour. There is all the interest of science in the case, though there is incomparably more than this signifies. For the spiritual nature of man is a fact, one of the realities of the world, and that one of which the most can be made. The scientific mind neglects no reality of importance. In the spiritual life of man there is matter of the most absorbing interest. Countless souls are waiting in need, all having latent spiritual power, and, if that power were brought into exercise, having a destiny more glorious than could now be described or imagined. What secular work could be equal in importance or interest to that of assisting such people to rise to their happiest and most promising condition? The mastery of nature, with all that follows from it, seems nothing in comparison. To heal the body or to supply its needs is indeed much,—and yet it is comparatively little; there is a boundless want yet remaining. For each person, however placed, there is an ideal of life and of himself that begins to dawn on him in this present time, which he could gradually approach in actual fact, and without the attainment of which he is restless and desolate, finding himself convicted of failure in respect of the most imperious obligation. The ideal in question is clearly known, and is at length reached, through trust in God, Christian faith, and endeavours after true righteousness like Christ's, with the use of many aids, natural, intellectual, and spiritual, supplied in the church, in retirement, and in

the world. Now, great and amazing as are the triumphs of human skill which have already been registered, they are slight compared to that work which remains to be done in inducing and assisting people thus to make the best of themselves. A Christian man or woman is the most precious object on earth, full of present marvel and of infinite possibilities: one spirit, according to a common observation, is worth more than the material universe. And the population as a whole is fitted and designed for the high end now indicated. Multitudes, as a matter of fact, knowing the vanity of the world, are craving and striving for the chief good, which is supramundane. Each person at home and each one abroad is formed to be a separate and distinctive type of character, fitted in his own way to resemble Christ and glorify God. Thus, what a sacred and important place there is and must remain for the administration of the ordinances of our religion, when they are used as the means of drawing out and promoting the loftiest spirit and strongest character in men. One is not engrossed with fancies, ideas, or doctrines only, but has to do with living people, the chief of God's works. These are taken as they are, to be trained and stimulated to rise to a better state, which they can attain and undoubtedly ought to strive after. The object will not be accomplished by plying them with what is taken to be the sum of necessary saving truth: such "truth" may even thoroughly repel, and be as stones in place of bread. Their position, powers, and cravings have to be considered; they are beings to be studied as they actually stand, and to be recognised as supremely worth studying, so that they may have the portion of good put before them which they can assimilate and truly profit by, which will be the means of eliciting their personal spiritual power, of awakening new life, and creating an unflagging and fruitful interest in the matters of faith. Each of them may be made to see that

he has the capacity for coping with the high things of the spirit and of God, that he may be the possessor of the chief good now, and may be enriched with the largest hope.

(6) The fact of the *Value of Souls* falls to be considered here, and has already been indicated. It is often understood as one effect of the recent modification of religious belief, that the old conviction regarding the worth of the soul is passing away. Nowadays many questions are raised as to the precise nature of the Atonement and of the future state, with the result that the former definite conceptions of the value of souls and of the loss of souls are not held fast as undoubted representations of the truth. Though there may not be blank denial as regards these topics, there is not whole-hearted assent as of old; there is some loosening of the structure of thought, and a sense of instability in consequence; in other words, the ideas in their traditional form have lost for a multitude of persons all constraining force.

Yet there is permanent truth in the conviction of the unspeakable value of souls, and consequently in the assertion that the loss of souls is of infinite significance—truth of a kind that approves itself to our current mode of thinking. “Every life has its potentiality of greatness.” If the whole community were to interest themselves deeply in those concerns which have the principal claim, if each person were separately to cultivate and employ the religious talent which lies embedded in his soul, the people would have reached their best earthly state; every life, being consecrated to its chief end, would be supremely blessed. And with all the inventions and the progress that have been attained, how very much remains to be done when this cultivation of the higher nature of man has in multitudes of instances been wholly neglected! With a new century there appears to be a new world, or rather a

great multitude of worlds, of an order or worth far superior to that of the realm which is seen, looming before us, and waiting to be explored and subdued, and made to resound with God's praise. This is the unseen world or worlds in mankind. Every mind is a special creation, distinct from every other, as all God's works are, distinct in its native powers and qualities, and placed, too, in an earthly situation peculiar to itself alone. There are special thoughts, feelings, work, difficulties for everyone. If, then, all became living souls, committing themselves to their Creator and developing their individual talents, there would be a vast multiplicity of spirits on earth who would be a measureless wonder, it might be said, to men and angels, seeing that there must be the most rich and varied store of heavenly truth and goodness acquired and capable of being communicated by them. God's gifts to the soul are suited for it; they answer to its needs, so as to be of real value, and to be a positive help. And as the position and needs of each person are different from those of all others, the spiritual possessions that could be obtained are endless in variety. If people did their part as they could and ought, the little that is now received would be increased many million times. The mind, the soul, is the greatest part of man, connecting him with heaven and infinity; and so, though many signal victories have been gained in one sphere in recent generations, it is but a slight achievement compared to what is waiting to be performed and urgently pressing. The past affords encouragement to proceed and ground to hope; but mankind have advanced but a little way in the fulfilment of their most elevating and satisfying task. This last consists in raising men's minds and souls to their best state. In every person there is a hidden nature, which, if duly cultivated with the use of the aids and means which are freely set at man's disposal, would make him entitled to rank as one of the same spiritual family with apostles,

prophets, reformers, and the other shining examples of Christian worth throughout the centuries. Thus, too, there is an indescribable waste and loss, while thousands on thousands who have this inherent power live and die as if they had it not, never answering in a real or adequate manner any of the numerous calls addressed to them, bidding them stir up the gift. We readily and fully acknowledge the loss when one of good native parts has never had the intellect trained by education. Now, every person, having a reasonable soul made in God's image, is empowered to know and serve God, and so to rise even on earth to a far greater eminence than any mere enlightenment of the understanding could win. Natural gifts of the first order are limited to a very few people. In a single parish, at a given time, it would be much if there was even *one* young person who would grow up to be eminent in letters or science, or in any field whatever. And it often seems that, with the spread of general enlightenment and the extension of the field of knowledge, the causes that favour the existence of genius are weakened or paralysed. Yet what has been withheld from the vast majority, at least, is after all only an inferior blessing, the endowment which by itself alone, however great it may be in its kind, leaves man empty and sore at heart. On the other hand, the paramount gift of religion is available for everyone, and the power to receive and use it exists in all men. The possessor of it draws from the fount of inspiration in God, and has forthwith attained high rank. It has been truly said that "the most ordinary person, when he prays, when he suffers, and puts his hope in Heaven, has at that moment something in him that might be expressed in the manner of Milton, of Homer, or Tasso, if he had the education that would teach him to clothe his thoughts in words." Attention to the supreme duty required, that relating to God, does confer greatness, happiness, and

blessing, both present and enduring ; opens up even here a view into brighter and more glorious realms, where is true and lasting reality, and secures a share of this treasure ; and makes the man himself a new creature, possessed of greater self-respect, clothed with new dignity and worth, having light where all before was darkness, and sustained in all the chances and changes of life by undying hope and trust.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE TREATMENT OF PARTIAL DEVELOPMENTS OF RELIGION

WHEN faith is understood as a spiritual growth which we have traced from its commencement towards its completion, we have a guiding clue for the interpretation of imperfect, partially developed formations. Spirit recognises spirit under any disguise. And truth enables us to understand error, but does not incite us harshly to denounce it. On the contrary, it may be confidently held that we are nearer the truth the more generous we are. We can be not merely tolerant towards diverging views: to tolerate a person, it has been justly said, is to affront him; we go on to be sympathetic and appreciative. Here and now there cannot be even a specific reference to the multitude of creeds and schools; only a few outstanding varieties or faiths will be looked at as examples.

(a) The *Young* among ourselves call for particular consideration. There is a period when independence in religion is out of place. The very young must be receptive, taking the truths of religion almost entirely on trust; they do not, in the true and full sense, judge Revelation by reason. How is their position to be understood relatively to that of the person whose spiritual career has been delineated in this treatise?

Now, it may be said that the truth should be put before

them which is suited for their tender years. By this means, on the human side faith is created and kept alive; and if the *life* continues as the age of maturity arrives, there is the means of appropriating the spiritual food which is convenient for that and every succeeding period. Even at the outset God and goodness are open to the soul's intuition. God, although the Highest Being, is indeed specially accessible to the child because of its unsullied purity: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." In the fresh young life there is unbounded delight in nature (in the glory and beauty of nature rather than in the wisdom displayed in its arrangements), and ability to discern the presence of God in nature. Goodness, especially in the form of obedience and kindness, is readily appreciated. The story is relished, and whether as biography or fiction, may be used to enforce wholesome lessons with acceptance. And even without such personal embodiment, high spiritual thought may be conveyed, and with more effect if the form is adequate to the matter. Now, there are many gems of prose, especially in Scripture, and gems of poetry in religious literature, which serve this educative purpose, and are well fitted to make religion a joy and a power in the life. And the same result is secured at the period in question by the practice of praise in song. The subjects of faith, brought home by such means,—and the means are superabundant,—impress the susceptible heart of the child; and from the fact that they do gain the heart, the well-known demand of the child for the *truth* is in so far satisfied. And when it is felt that the things of faith justly claim reverence as being true and right, and as words uttered, so to say, by the Eternal God Himself, that they are indeed the best things one knows, and are not a collection of mysterious, but meaningless and barren statements merely, there is good hope that as life advances they will not be cast aside, as they are in great danger of being when there is unwise

guidance and shortsighted procedure in the first and formative period.

There are hard matters in our religion that the child cannot bear. This must be admitted, though we do not agree with Ritschl when he holds that faith in Christ, love to Him, as being something very serious and not a playful affection merely, is beyond the capacity of a child, and that "faith in Christ can be expected only in maturer life" (*Justification and Atonement*, vol. iii., trans., p. 599). Should the young person be familiarised with these harder topics, or have the memory well stored with them, in order that they may yield fruit in the dull and trying years of the future? If so, he *will* at once try to get a meaning, and, of course, it is sure to be a fantastic meaning, for them,—and ere long, as the sense for truth is developed by education, may end by discarding them and all religion at the same time. Rather let young faith be fostered by means of what can really be assimilated; and as the faith is thus carried on to the maturer period, it lays hold of the fresh matter that is adapted to the new needs, goes repeatedly in search of such matter, and proves its vitality and increases its strength by the very searching and finding. Middle or later life does not need to be provided for, and cannot be properly provided for, by storing the memory in advance. If there is living faith at that maturer time, it gladly exerts itself to find its sustenance, as we have seen in the preceding part of this book. It has all the world and all history to roam over and utilise, and it has Christ as the standard and criterion of truth. But if there is no living faith in the man, what can the *disjecta membra* of doctrine retained in the memory avail? Indeed, the fact that the sum of doctrine, though only in its dry details, is recollected, may, and doubtless often does, create the delusive supposition that sufficient *faith* is possessed. *The* critical matter in the earliest period is

the cultivation of living faith for the present and the immediately coming years, especially in view of the approaching time of youth when the world allures, when a smattering of knowledge is apt to lead one to move questions and to dispose one to doubt, and there is a danger of entire shipwreck for faith. Should the danger which is so very real be increased by burdening the intelligence or memory with matter that may soon be found untenable, and only for an ulterior purpose which after all cannot be served by such means? Above all, is an evil effect to be feared from the inculcation of the idea of the utter corruption of human nature, especially at a time of life when there is a warm love for pure goodness, a keen perception of God's mercies, and a strong, lasting inclination to utter forth His praise. The sense for truth is violated by such teaching. This leads us to repeat that the truth is called for even by the youngest. But the *simple* elements of religion contain most precious truth, take one in conscious thought to the sphere of eternal reality, and so afford scope for appropriate intellectual exercise both to young and to old. As the mind is kept open for reality and nothing else, it is fitted in due time, when occasion requires, for the reception of truth which was at first beyond its grasp.

Again, as youth succeeds childhood, the demand for reality is still urgent. Generous enthusiasm is a characteristic of youth, but there is a detestation of all that is false and hollow. Genuine excellence of nature, disinterested, forceful action or endurance as exemplified by the best Christians, is thoroughly appreciated. Christian biography (the life of a President Lincoln or a William of Orange, *e.g.*) therefore appeals with effect to the better impulses at the stage of life now contemplated, and becomes a schoolmaster to bring one to Christ. Christ's manliness, His activity in acquiring knowledge and in

the performance of work, His courage, etc. (above, p. 145 ff.), are calculated to attract and to impress with authority.

But here, if anywhere, it is apparent that in a few sentences one does but touch the fringe of a great subject. We only seek to indicate the bearing of the question on the general thought of this treatise. In particular, the difficulty of making prayer appear a felt necessity to the youth must be admitted. In the case of the infant, as yet pure and fresh, as we are accustomed to say, from the hand of God, prayer is in a manner spontaneous; it is almost natural as the language of innocence. In the mature person it is the cry of need evoked especially by defeat, by disappointment with the world and self. But there is an interval in youth during which one can neither claim the innocence on the one hand, nor acknowledge the need on the other. There seems to be everything to hope for from life here and now. Why express a deep sense of need for higher gifts when little or no need is felt? Besides, the means of expression seem to be wanting. The form of prayer learned in childhood has served its day, and loses meaning when repeated for thousands of times. It is accordingly abandoned; yet the youth finds he has no independent power which would qualify him to frame new and suitable petitions of his own. It seems that in view of such a position we ought to form a large conception of the nature of prayer, as an aspiration towards *the best kind of life*. When one has the dew of his youth, he ought not to be called upon to lament before God grievous pains and ills of which he knows nothing. He should be encouraged to think that man has a lofty goal set before him, and is supplied with transcendent powers to enable him to reach it, and that even earthly existence offers great rewards and possibilities for him, if he is true to himself and the light that is in him; indeed,

that if these rewards and possibilities are neglected, he will be in all respects, even from the religious point of view, a failure. He ought to ask in seclusion, when none but God is near, what is the best kind of life for him, what he is specially fitted to accomplish. There must be weakness and cowardice such as youth itself despises, when one turns away from this duty and privilege of religious inquiry, the moment it occurs to the mind to give due heed to it. And if it is a righteous and successful career *in the world* that one's desire is mainly fixed upon in such times of meditation, even so it is well. Soon the defects of the world's gains and promises will be made apparent in the best possible way, namely, by actual trial; and then the purely spiritual blessing looms out and is sought in all sincerity, as that which alone can suffice. The spiritual goal is discerned in its true and independent character, even if one first makes for it as it is decked out with the attractive hues of things seen and temporal. The conviction is reached on the solid ground of experience, that a good which is perfect and invisible is necessary and is attainable even during the life on earth.

(b) The *Jews* of the present day hold a spiritual faith which ought to be acknowledged by us as of much value, and recognised as a basis on which a yet higher faith may be gradually and intelligently built up by them. They believe in the spiritual God, in Righteousness as revealed in the Old Testament, and in Immortality. Now, as we go back to *Revelation*, and judge *Revelation* by reason, we can put before them truth that commends itself as the necessary completion of their own religious principles, and, moreover, nothing is presented to them that is merely speculative or only of human origin and of a nature which is calculated to repel them. As a matter of fact, enlightened

Jews and Christians are now very much of one mind regarding the principal concerns of religion. They approximate closely to each other. It may be said there remains a vital difference in the beliefs which they respectively hold regarding the Divinity of Christ, that the Jewish faith is Unitarian. But a multitude even of Christians reach their faith in the Divinity of Christ by first recognising the goodness, the sinlessness, of the man Jesus. If they have gone on to see God in Christ, their success and clearness of conviction is due not to a hasty profession, but to the fact that they have felt their way to the issue with scrupulous care and caution. And many of the educated Jews in these days are disposed, as we shall see, to admit the ideal goodness of Jesus. These do not believe, with the mass of their less enlightened co-religionists, in a return of their people to Palestine, or in a Messiah yet to come, and do not practise any ceremonies which are not found to be helpful in improving their lives. For them the Messianic age is simply the coming time when all men will be led to believe in one God and to follow righteousness, and when there will be peace over all the earth. It is but reasonable and just that we should regard them as fellow-travellers on the same spiritual path which is pursued by Christians, and should treat them as brethren. Their perception of righteousness may be trusted to constrain them to rest only in the Revelation of completed righteousness made in Christ.

For there is the objection to the faith of these modern Jews that, as it stands, it breaks down the Divine law and makes it whatever the individual pleases: it does not accept the whole Old Testament law, nor yet the New Testament presentation of Christ either,—else the faith would be *ipso facto* definitely Christian,—but only a fragment of Revelation arbitrarily chosen. And there is no due provision made for removing the offence of sin

and for the attainment of forgiveness from a righteous God. The religion as imparting the knowledge of righteousness suffices to condemn for wrong, but it does not suffice equally well to restore and preserve peace to the soul. Where, as in the case under consideration, the people have great talent amounting often to genius, and the faith they have inherited troubles the conscience and does not give rest or satisfaction, it is not to be wondered at though they should renounce it altogether, like Paul of old, and either abandon themselves to ungodliness, or with the apostle adopt the better faith of Christ. Many of those able Jews who have distinguished themselves in worldly affairs set aside the faith of their fathers, and even all religious belief, *e.g.*, the two who originated the Social-democratic movement and International Socialism—Lassalle and Marx: they sank into unbelief, and the former was killed in a duel.

But since religion, based, too, on special Revelation, has been so long inwrought in the heart and mind of this race, a lapse into unbelief on the part of the enlightened members does not seem to be the alternative that is likely to be adopted on a great scale; for if there are mysteries and difficulties in Theism or Christianity for the keen intellect, there are more and greater in Atheism or Agnosticism. The thoughtful Jews may rather be expected to accept the Christian faith in its ethical substance and spirit, *i.e.* in its truth. What, then, do they think at this day about Jesus Christ? An interesting correspondence on this matter, which took place towards the end of the year 1899, was published in the Paris *Siecle*. A well-known Frenchman, himself a Christian, Père Hyacinthe (Loyson), taking a suggestion from the miscarriage of justice in the notorious Dreyfus case, wrote to a Jew, Dr. Max Nordau, author and journalist, expressing admiration for the Jewish people, and putting it to this representative of them, whom he

described as a champion of Israel, whether the Jews of to-day ought not now at least to acknowledge that Jesus had been unjustly condemned to death by their forefathers, and by the wicked authorities of Jerusalem, contrary to the better mind of the righteous people at that time, and surely contrary to the sound and upright judgment of the Jews of our time. If such an acknowledgment, he says, were made by present-day Jews, the hatred against them would cease, and their own minds would be relieved by the just confession ; they would be essentially in agreement with Christians in regarding Christ as wholly righteous, and the result would be a great blessing from God to Israel and to the world.

In a day or two the Jew replied. He says, among other things, some of which Christians unhesitatingly deny, that the Jews look upon Jesus as an ideal Jew, worthy of all admiration. As described to us, Jesus, he goes on to observe, keeps the law ; he occupies himself constantly with eternal things ; he feels himself in spiritual communion with God. He looks down on the accidents and the mortality of earthly existence ; and his prayer—the Lord's Prayer—is the best that a believer in God has ever framed. Jesus, he adds, is soul of our soul, as he is flesh of our flesh : who among us could think of excluding him from the people of Israel ? Whenever a Jew goes back to the sources and looks at Christ without prejudice, he exclaims with admiration, Putting aside his claim to be the Messiah, we take this man as one of our people : he honours our race, and we claim him for ourselves, just as we claim the Synoptic Gospels as the flower of purely Jewish literature.

As to the death of Christ, he says, the Jews do not need to revise the unjust sentence, or to make any acknowledgment in regard to it. For it was not their forefathers that passed that sentence, but the Romans. The Jewish

law knew no such means of execution as the cross; and besides, it would not have allowed one to be put to death by any means whatever at that particular time on the eve of the Feast. But even if the former Jews had been guilty of condemning Christ, he points out that those of them who are now on the earth ought not to be hated and persecuted as if they were responsible for that past deed. This continued injustice has been hitherto the means of preventing the Jews from declaring in public their esteem for the exalted moral grandeur of the figure of Jesus. From the disciples they drew conclusions as to the master. That was wrong, but yet pardonable in view of the bitter experience of the victims. Such is the substance of the two letters.

The principal point is that the Jew, who, as his language shows, is confident that he expresses the mind of others generally of his race, has nothing to urge against Jesus, but everything to say in praise of Him. He was righteous unto death. So firmly convinced are these modern Jews of this fact, that they endeavour if possible to shift the blame of His crucifixion away from their ancestors to the Romans exclusively. This, no doubt, is to deny the truth of our records and all the evidence at this point, and to make the Romans do what they, who cared nothing for the Jewish religion or parties, could have had no desire or occasion on their own account to do. But it is not wise or charitable to insist on reminding living people of the sin of their forefathers. If those now alive see and believe that Jesus was altogether holy in life and in death, very much is implied in that. Our contemporaries among the enlightened Jews being thus far themselves of a right way of thinking, the momentous consequence results that for them, as for the professing Christians, Jesus becomes the highest *Revelation of God*, that He shows God to the world, or brings God to it, that through Jesus men are brought and kept near to God.

Once admit in practice the entire goodness of Jesus, and the essence of Christianity is adopted. Jesus becomes the spiritual Messiah, the Messiah in effect, in deed, and in truth. The way is open for the course of advance, which was referred to at p. 165 ff.

Other utterances of contemporary Jewish writers of high intellectual eminence—and those quoted represent Britain, the continent of Europe, and America—are the following:—Jesus was “the most important Jew that ever lived, exercising greater influence upon mankind and civilisation than any other person has ever done, whether within the Jewish race or without it.”—“The Jews have disowned their greatest son.”—“Jesus is one of the greatest geniuses the world has produced; but he was, like all geniuses, outside the general run of mankind in anticipating by ten centuries the emancipation of the slave, and by about twenty socialism and the emancipation of women.”—“I, as a Jew, do say that it appears to me Jesus became the victim of fanaticism combined with jealousy and lust of power in Jewish hierarchs, even as in later days Huss and Jerome of Prague, Latimer and Ridley, became the victims of fanaticism combined with jealousy and lust of power in Christian hierarchs. No enlightened man can or will deny that the doctrines taught in his name have been the means of reclaiming the most important portion of the civilised world from gross idolatry, and of making the Revealed Word of God known to nations of whose very existence the men who sentenced him were ignorant.”

But we ought not to forget that the Jews can give in the matter of things spiritual, if they also need to receive. If this people, who have been pre-eminently distinguished by their brilliant talent and their tenacity of purpose in many spheres, as in literature and art, in politics, journalism, finance, etc., were to advance to the Christian faith, and were to devote their consummate powers to the furtherance

of the cause of Christianity, our religion, which in this materialistic age is not accepted with whole-hearted assent by the mass of men even in Christendom, and is often but an empty form, might well become under God a victorious world-wide reality, fruitful of positive and immeasurable good. People nowadays seek an ethical religion, want to find religion saturated with the element of righteousness. The faith of the Cross has been too often sentimental or hazy; the Atonement has been obscure, has not commanded the full assent of the conscience. Now Jews, whose race has been informed for three thousand years with the Old Testament principle of righteousness, seem fitted, if they adopted the Christian faith which culminates in the Cross, to commend this faith, with its fulness of love and mercy, as right, as worthy of a perfectly just God, and wholly credible to the reason and praiseworthy to the heart of man. The qualities of the human life of our Lord, namely, inward and outward integrity, independence, clearness and confidence of spirit, etc., are necessarily presented in the Gospels in Oriental forms, and are such as Jews of the present day could elucidate in Jesus *the Jew* with point and force—in a way that Christians of other race could not hope to do. Compare the difficulty which we experience in trying to enter fully into the mind, *e.g.*, of the French or Germans of the present: how much greater must the difficulty be when we turn to one of Semitic origin in the remote past. It is only during the last two generations that the Life, the human Personality, of Jesus, His principles of thought and action as He mixed with men and communed with God the Father, have been systematically investigated; and though much has been accomplished, the inquiry can only be said to be under way: it is by no means ended. Believers were previously engrossed—down almost to the middle of the nineteenth century—with salvation through the Cross of Christ, with the sufficiency

of the Cross alone. Now, Jews, having general endowments of mind which have secured in the case of many of them the highest worldly distinction and success, and sometimes even the power of influencing governments and the privilege of mixing with princes, and having the special advantage besides of oneness of race with Jesus, appear to be peculiarly qualified to set forth the lineaments of the earthly Jesus "evidently"—in a manner that would constrain every honest and good heart—and to impart to the time the hopefulness and enthusiasm which it greatly needs. As St. Paul anticipated, the restoration of the Jews might well be the means of causing an ample outpouring of Heaven's best blessings on the world.

(c) The *Heathen* generally are in a sense like children mentally and spiritually, but with the outward form of men. Like children, they have minds which are receptive of the idea of God, but their thoughts are greatly in need of correction. Being impressed with the overmastering force of the blind powers of nature, they have begun with the belief in false gods; they have no proper conception of the spirituality or righteousness of God. Thus a process of religious training and growth is required. Now, as in the case of children, there is profitable matter which is at once level to their apprehension, and which can be pressed on them with effect. As they come under the rule or influence of men belonging to civilised lands, and as they enter the field of commerce, they soon learn the significance of law. Law with its pains and penalties constrains them to follow the path of righteousness, and in process of time, through the perception of righteousness in man, they attain to the knowledge of righteousness in God. Otherwise, without that observation on the human side, they could have neither ideas nor language to enable them to lay hold of the truth as to God's righteousness. In particular, the

justice which is dispensed by British administrators in so many parts of the globe is an object-lesson on a great scale, teaching that moral power is superior to physical force, showing the latter under restraint, and used only to promote the ends of equity and orderly government. The moral world begins to be recognised as supreme. Moral facts mould the experience of those who had once been ignorant of them, and such facts in great variety are seen to determine the action of the best lives with which the people come in contact. Thus the law is known which comes before the gospel, which gives meaning to the gospel and creates a deep need for it. Mercy in man prepares for the faith in God's mercy. The disinterested labours of the Christian missionary, the aid and kindness bestowed by him in many spheres and on every occasion that offers, disclose a new world of humanity and love. Life produces life, and at length the highest results in religion may be expected.

But the power of nature is strong, and in the first instance it completely holds the field. Immediate success in subduing it must not be looked for. There will be risings and fallings and risings again. Isaiah in his great *missionary* chapter (the 19th), taking Egypt and Assyria as representing the heathen nations, foresees the day when they, *i.e.* heathen parts generally, will attain to the full knowledge of the Lord, and will be richly blessed accordingly; but he does not expect this happy change to come about quickly, knowing from observation of the long training of Israel how slow nations are to serve God in truth. The prophet speaks in the earlier part of the chapter of much trouble, confusion, and darkness in Egypt, of the horrors of war, of a fierce and cruel rule, and of mental and moral degradation on the part of the inhabitants, as preceding the era of spiritual faith. But these very distresses will cause the people to fear the Lord of the whole earth,

and to yield submission to that law of His that goes forth from Judah. The land of Judah (ver. 17) shall be a terror to Egypt. The counsel, the holy mind of the Lord of hosts, will come to be known, and it will inspire fear. At length that fear will lead on to the better service which is offered by willing hearts—to the true worship of which Isaiah speaks, and which ends in healing. At the close of the chapter the day is foreseen when Egypt, the old oppressor, and Assyria, the contemporary foe, will be pervaded by the faith of Israel, and the latter will be a blessing to both the other countries. There is to be a real blessing to the foreigner when the religion that springs from Israel will become his accepted faith, when "there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord" (v. 19).

A prophet sees earthly things in the light of eternity. This prophet had risen to the comprehension of eternal principles of God's working in the world, principles which hold good in our time therefore as surely as in others. It is true now that irreligion and unrighteous courses naturally bring a curse and indescribable misery on the land that is given over to them; it is the case now that the restoration of true religion anywhere is like the return of light and of blessing. There is also a transition time during which the law is accepted by the constraint of necessity and in fear, and only after some interval is the devotion and love of the heart accorded in worship.

Egypt, as it appears at this day, may once more be taken as illustrating the measures by which a country is restored from barbarism to faith and civilisation. About a generation ago, that land was afflicted with a ruler, Ismail, who robbed and cruelly oppressed his own subjects. And a wrong religion that does not recognise Christ or His law as supreme has long prevailed over those parts. The very situation had arisen in which from the

nature of things much trouble was to be expected. Revolt and internal war and the incursion of savage hordes from the desert resulted, and are known as matters of recent history. As surely as there were false religion and gross, unbridled iniquity in the place of power, there were fear, sorrow, and grievous distress throughout the territory. But next, the opportunity was given for recovery. The power of our own country interposed, as it still continues to do, to restore justice in government, and because the great highway, the Canal, which there unites the opposite sides of the earth, was endangered by the disorder. The enormous benefit of righteous rule was established. The supremacy of right was secured—never, it is hoped, to be lost again—by the crushing defeat of vast forces, that had been used only for ruthless bloodshed and all manner of iniquity. Then means were taken to spread the light of education in what had been one of the darkest parts of the earth. The prospect opened up was fitted to fire the heart and imagination of all who loved God and man. Lands naturally rich as the finest garden, but which had been turned into a wilderness or a series of charnel-houses, have been recalled to peaceful trade; and there is ample warrant for believing that in that trade no one will be allowed to defraud another. Yet commerce, however lucrative and well-regulated, is not the chief blessing in store; it is but a commencement, a shadow of better things to come. The day of truest blessing in any region is the day when there is faith in God as He is known to us in Christ, and a willing pursuit of the pattern of Christ's goodness—when there is an altar to the Lord in the midst of that land. Mere trade, if nothing is regarded above and beyond it, is corrupting. The mere heaping up of wealth is not the chief end of man's life. Commerce is principally of value only as a means to an end. It indoctrinates the untutored races in the principles of law and honesty. It elicits powers which were dormant,

and above all it insists—for its life and growth depend on this condition—that in the use of those powers, in the dealings between man and man, regard must be had to integrity. The spiritual fruit of commerce is, then, that by it very largely the knowledge of right and wrong is brought home and made plain to those whose minds were darkened on the subject before. Then the same persons are drawn to seek relief for the inward want that is soon perceived as the effect of the operation of law; they are prepared and urged to set up an altar to the Lord in their midst, to understand and really to value and appreciate the salvation from sin that is offered in the gospel, to render the willing service of a consecrated life, and so to receive not only temporal but also the best spiritual blessings, those which time and trial show to be the most satisfying in themselves, and the only blessings that will certainly endure.

But, after all, what real likelihood is there, it might be asked, that if earthly prosperity and peace are enjoyed in such localities, and kindly Nature lavishes her returns to settled industry, men will go on to raise the religious altar? Will they remember who is the Giver of all their good? Will they adopt the Christian faith, or any faith? Christianity is far from being universally accepted at home, though we all know the law of right and wrong: can we then be at all confident that it will be gladly embraced abroad?

Now, at all events, it is well and needful that the opportunity should be given to those who have been in heathen darkness to gain for themselves a saving apprehension of Christ's gospel. And if the gospel is proclaimed to them in such a way as to have meaning and force, *i.e.* if it is declared to hearers who have been prepared for it, and made to feel the want of it, then we may rest assured that, since God has fashioned the hearts of men alike, many at least will give due heed to the chief message of Revelation,

just as many do at home. God may be trusted to draw His children there as here; and as they have human souls and human cravings for a perfect good, we may be assured that there will be those in remote parts who see and give effect to His gracious purpose. We may well enter into the mind of Isaiah, who had every confidence in these matters, seeing in advance the altar set up to God in the foreign land, and the purest blessings flowing to the people who worshipped at it. Faith will lead us to be convinced that God's fatherly purpose with mankind is fulfilled only in part when bodily security and bodily comforts have been conferred on them, that His purpose is also, and above all, to bless them in mind and soul.

Furthermore, there is a special and standing reminder from examples of self-sacrifice which have been witnessed in many countries that are under the protection of Britain, and in others as well, that there are good things which are unseen, and that man, when he has risen to his noblest state, has chosen them in preference to anything that is visible,—and this as the effect of setting up an altar in his heart to Christ and to God. Thus, to take the particular region which has been mentioned, it cannot be forgotten how, about twenty years ago, a man went out to it from this, the greatest commercial country of the world, taking his life in his hand, seeking in the most disinterested way to effect a righteous and merciful work of deliverance, and how, after a long and heroic effort, he was killed at his post. That story and example must remain to disturb and condemn any who devote themselves solely to the accumulation of earthly riches. They will see that there is a kind of life which is immeasurably superior to their own, a life which, at whatever cost to self, seeks the glory of God and the good of man. And the incomparable power and worth of the religion which formed such a character is openly shown. So the death of General Gordon in the remote Egyptian

town should be regarded by those who are apt to doubt and be faithless, as seed that will raise up fresh adherents of the Church of Christ in many coming generations. We appear to see as if before our eyes the causes and powers at work which, under God, are able to bring about that issue. Gordon himself had learned of Christ, trusted in the salvation of Christ, was made what he was by the Spirit of Christ and by conscious imitation of Him, and braved death while discharging a Christian work, and trusting in the life and immortality which Christ revealed. There is in all this a powerful incentive to those who hear the narrative, as the natives and others will do, not only to honour the spirit and character of the man, but to seek the same religious faith that formed him. They will seek to rise above mere man, who cannot save the soul, to the Christ who can, and through whom men are raised to their most exalted state. And, as has been indicated, in many distant lands there have been men who resembled more or less closely in spirituality and worth the hero now referred to, and whose memory remains like his, a power for good which is incalculable.

But in the Far East, the Heathen have proved themselves in more ways than one to be *men* of consummate power. We glance at one land in that part of the world, itself like a world, namely, India, presenting old-established faiths and philosophies held by men of peculiarly subtle intellect. The heathen there cannot be described as children; they must be taken as they are in their developed state. But if all that is good in their faith and practice is frankly acknowledged by the Christian missionary, as is now commonly done, there is hope of endless progress. As usual, time is required, and there can be no expectation of an uninterrupted advance. Not every intellectual renaissance in the East, or elsewhere, is to be

viewed as the certain prognostication of a spiritual awakening. But God, truth, and righteousness exert steady pressure, especially through the influence of the West, and in the long run the pressure will be irresistible. Already there are promising signs, and the means and steps by which the brighter prospect may ultimately be realised can in some measure be ascertained. This section may be fitly closed by a quotation from an article in the *Nineteenth Century* (October 1900), written by an Indian, whose name has been familiar to many in this country. As he contemplates the spiritual progress of the East, his great hope is that the British, as a body in India, will be guided in their lives by the principles of the New Testament, will abstain from violence and such crying forms of iniquity, and will abound in sympathy.

“During the last twenty-five years a great change is observable in the attitude of our people towards Christianity. They have certainly great reverence for the life and teachings of Christ; they have largely outgrown the old prejudice against studying the Bible. They do not, indeed, accept the Christ of popular theology, but they believe in the spirit of Christ. We hold that by worshipping God, Christ teaches us how to worship; by loving God he teaches us the love of God and man; by devoutly suffering and dying he teaches us the great truth of resignation to the Will of God. In no country, as in India, has there been such an apotheosis of great men. The warrior, the king, the saint—nay, whoever has shown any great excellence—is set down as divine, as the incarnation of God. The divinity of man, therefore, does not startle the Hindu mind. We believe in the Brahmo Somaj, that the divinity of Christ is only an intensified form of that doctrine. If God’s excellence dwells in every man more or less, the greatest human excellence, as it dwells in Christ, is nothing more than the incarnation of the Deity in the highest sense. But

every teacher is not the same as every other, and the Divine Humanity of Christ as the Son of God is not the same as the divine humanity of every other teacher, and God dwells in him as He dwelt in no other. Yet Christ is our kith and kin, very different in the degree of his perfection, but always imitable and attainable. We believe that the uniqueness of Christ does not lie in his being the Almighty Eternal Creator, but in his identification with what is deepest and divinest in every man and woman. The wisdom of the wise is strange to the ignorance of the foolish, the holiness of the saint repudiates the impurity of the sinner, but the light and love of Christ include the foolish and the fallen if they are only willing to receive his love. The Jew excluded the Gentile, the Hindu excluded the Mlechha, the Greek excluded the Barbarian, but the Christ ideal embraces all races and all creeds alike. To many of us in the Brahmo Somaj the Christ ideal is the type of all human excellence. Nor do we believe Christ to be an abstract ideal only, but an historical and personal life. This life is the presence and force of God in the actual manhood of the world. It existed in men before Christ was born, and it has entered into men after Christ's death. Let no one, therefore, suppose that the central idea and type of the universal man abolishes the various teachers and types of manhood born in other races. We maintain thus that the greatest and best leaders of all lands will for ever continue to retain their places as national examples and lights, but that the excellences of all peoples and popular heroes shall be summed up to form the unity of the Son of God and Man. Perhaps the Christian missionaries in India have not very largely helped us to form this idea; certainly modern Christian literature of the time has helped us more. The missionaries have, however, always deserved our honour for the humanity and unselfishness of their work. They have been our educators, oftentimes our

friends, oftentimes examples of the moral excellence of their races. In great calamities they have befriended the people; in wild, uncultivated provinces they have been the messengers of knowledge and civilisation. The only obstruction in their way has been their theology. But even that theology is much more temperate now than it was at one time. They no longer attack Hindu faith and principles with the same violence as before, they no longer criticise our national prophets with the same antipathy, nor do they look upon our national usages and reforms with the same disfavour. But this is not sufficient. We look forward to a day when Christian missionaries and Hindu reformers will form a brotherhood, different, indeed, in theology, but one in spirit, in aim, in the inspired humanity of Jesus Christ and the Fatherhood of God.

“The moral force of the Christian religion should not be exhausted by ordained Christian missionaries alone, but every English man and English woman in India should be a messenger of the spirit of their religion. They should be conscious of the great responsibility that rests upon them. The good name and the good influence of the Imperial Government rest upon what each Englishman does and thinks in India. The dense masses of our people have no chance of seeing their honoured Empress, nor her representatives among them. But they see and deal with the subordinate officials, and the non-official trader, planter, soldier.”

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A brief statement of results brings us to a conclusion. It is frequently pointed out by contemporary writers, that what is chiefly required now is not more theological knowledge, but a moral reformation. This pronouncement will probably be readily assented to; for it is obvious that, if all

men loved and pursued the good in the purest and most praiseworthy form in which they severally behold it, then, and then only, the most desirable condition of the world would be ushered in; earth would be like a forecourt of heaven. At the same time, the individual person, finding himself and others to be far from having attained this happy result, needs an effectual stimulus to induce him to attempt a reformation of the kind in himself; as things are he has no heart for it. Religion supplies the needed stimulus. By the mere perception of law, one can neither be compelled nor sufficiently encouraged to enter and continue in the difficult path. But when, in consequence of the prompting of one's better spirit and the truth-loving reason, an ethical religion is chosen and applied, the vision and reception of unequalled benefit draws forth the best powers; and, as time passes, there is a succession of diversified blessings, but essentially of the same species, serving to confirm the spiritual choice. Primarily, God and goodness alone have to be acknowledged. Nothing more is exacted at any time by the requirements of religion than one is capable of yielding. No fact or truth, whether in the physical or in the spiritual realm, is compromised; instead of "believing" with the utmost readiness whatever is currently given forth in the name of religion, the man of faith persistently refuses belief except where the matter in question approves itself to him as true. Hope and enthusiasm are preserved by the circumstance that each person who has this faith begun can see a goal for his aspiration which is altogether glorious, and yet within his reach. God's forgiveness for sin is trusted on grounds that are convincing to the reason—briefly, because even man at his best is merciful to the penitent, and because the Creator is in all respects better than the creature. Through adequate means, through men who are brought under our notice in all the Christian generations down

to our own, men who have been the most pious and exemplary, and who have been formed as they are by the influence of the Christian Church, Christ the Founder of the Church is understood by us not only as the ideal of goodness, but as the revealer in His life and by His death of the holy love of God in redemption.

At the present time, positive science and history, which seek for truth, are the soil out of which religion grows, and on which it thrives. There can be no question of antagonism between the highest spiritual product and the favouring element in which it maintains its life. On the contrary, as we observe this connection and what is implied in it, we find that there is the promise of incalculable benefits for religion. For example, as the material sphere, interpreted by modern methods, proves to be of astounding grandeur in the eyes of the whole world, people are impelled to scrutinise the higher spiritual revelation with the conviction that it will approve itself as yet more glorious. There is a well-grounded hope and prospect that the defects of narrowness and obscurity will be removed from Christian faith; and the conviction gains ground that though the faith must always in the last resort confront us with mystery, as the objects of nature themselves do, there is a world of eternal truth on the hither side of the mystery which is discernible and clear, and which is fraught with the most precious results for mankind. And whereas there has long been the discouraging supposition that Christianity is a system of beliefs which are hard, petrified, all but incomprehensible, and such that they can only be accepted in a half-hearted manner on external authority, the influence of science and of the historical spirit leads people to go back for themselves to the source and the primal causes of faith. Everyone is invited to draw from the living spring, and to exercise his own faculties, reason included, and so to gain a

faith which is wholly satisfying to himself, and wholly true. Such a faith can be purposely adapted by one to his own circumstances in life, and made to yield a boundless amount of good. It has arrived at a *modus vivendi* with the world of science as a matter of fact; in that world, the sovereign value of the religion is proved by personal trial. And no other means of attaining the needed proof is available; without spiritual experience in one's actual position, no exercise of reason can furnish it. *Solvitur ambulando*. And as in the multitude of individual adherents of Christianity who are thus personally active in the cultivation of faith, there is endless variety in unity, and again, as the growth in the case of each of them towards the fulness that is in Christ is unceasing, the magnitude and glory of the revelation are made increasingly manifest.

And the faith that is based on Revelation welcomes the fullest light; there is no restriction applied in any direction to the craving of the mind for truth. The place and function of philosophy are acknowledged; reason while adhering to its own laws must have free scope.<sup>1</sup> As seeking ultimate truth, it is capable of aiding the spiritual life which has been developed by laying hold of truth, and which, once it is formed, is itself the most commanding reality in the world. Spiritual philosophy can foster and invigorate that prime reality of existence, but dare not wound or destroy it, as the attempt would only recoil

<sup>1</sup> On the free activity of Reason (Philosophy) in Religion, as serving to promote spiritual life, it might well be asked what the condition of Christianity would have been now, if the work of reason had not been carried on in these last generations in the field of religion; if, e.g., the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and the conception of faith—the theology generally—which is associated with that doctrine, were all that was now available for educated and uneducated persons alike? Thus in the interest of religion at present and for the future, the continued application of reason to its pronouncements is indispensable: this prevents dogmatism and the sterilising of thought; religion is preserved as a living power suited for existing needs.

on itself. As science in its numerous fields prosecutes the search for truth and at the same time furthers the interests of man's earthly life, so philosophy, which aspires to reach the highest truth, and to show the necessary relation of truths in every department of knowledge, will in no way prejudice, will only promote, the highest interests of mankind, those, namely, of Christian faith and righteousness.

Among the questions which readily press themselves on our attention, there is the obvious one, Is faith equal to knowledge, or is it only a "belief" which is inferior to knowledge ("We have but faith: we cannot know")? Is it rightly described as amounting only to a probability? Those who hold it claim that it grasps the truth, and that, too, the highest kind of truth, and that it is sure, eagle-eyed, a light, as it were, from heaven in which one beholds the things of God and eternity,—of infinitely more value, therefore, than any intellectual endowment which is concerned only with the objects of earth. Yet it is certainly not equal to exact science, in so far as it does not rest on demonstration. Thus we need to prosecute the inquiry into the origin and limits of the mind's powers generally, so as to understand the nature of faith. Otherwise the evils of fanaticism, *e.g.*, or, again, those which result from Agnosticism in religion, are imminent. Belief ought always to be in accordance with the evidence. But as to the absence of demonstration, it has to be observed that by far the largest part of secular science is inexact. There is no sharp contrast, such as Kant alleged, between theoretical and practical reason, between exact science on the one hand and ethics and religion on the other. Rather from exact, mathematical science we pass by a series of gradations to the sciences of organic matter (as Biology), linguistic science, the historical sciences, mental and moral science, up to religious or theological science. Hence the unity of the

whole world of truth, sacred and secular, becomes the object of legitimate philosophical speculation.

The relation of faith to Revelation, and to science, history, and general worldly experience, naturally raises a multitude of problems. But this should be only a welcome fact. In the secular sphere there are endless problems, new and old, now calling for solution, giving vast scope for the exercise of thought, and speaking plainly of myriad worlds of reality in the physical domain. The boundless dimensions of the universe and the extent of man's powers and possibilities,—seeing that he is made aware by positive proof of the immensity by which he is compassed about,—are borne in upon one with fresh force and vividness. Now, it is above all the investigation of the physical elements that opens up the wider outlook referred to, and paves the way for immediate practical triumphs. Similarly, in religion, if the elemental power of faith is examined in its various relations, and if the object of faith is envisaged in its purity as it is set before us by Revelation, it may be trusted that the unique excellence and grandeur of the world of *Spirit* will become more and more apparent. Indeed, without such fruitful activity directed to the concerns of spirit, it seems possible that the wonder which ought to be elicited chiefly by religion might be transferred to the world which is apprehended by the senses.

The task of reason in *Dogmatics* has already been referred to (p. 39). Here it may be added, that the traditional language of religion, and even the modes of thought in which Christian faith found expression down to our own day, were conformed to the old Ptolemaic Astronomy. For example, God is viewed as located far away in the sky, in a heaven which is above the earth in space. The change to the Copernican Astronomy, with its new conception of the Solar System, and the discovery

of the universe of suns and systems, necessitate a recasting of theology. The work of reason here affects the theological articles as a whole. But obviously the result of it is to favour the cause of religion as a living power in the present.

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